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THE DATA OF MODERN ETHICS EXAMINED.

BY

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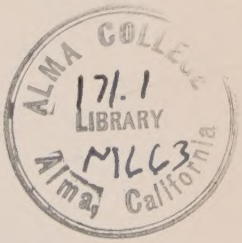
SECOND EDITION.



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:

BENZIGER BROTHERS,

Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.

1897.

14887

Permittitur, ut imprimatur, si iis ad quos pertinet, ita videbitur.

THEODORUS VAN ROSSUM, S.J.

BUFFALONE, N. Y.,
25, Julii, 1897.

Imprimatur.

✝MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,
Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, August 14, 1897.

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PREFACE.

A CRISIS in morals has come to pass in our days. The teachings not only of Christian revelation, but also of the philosophy underlying it, are set aside as having become no less obsolete than the mediæval views of the material universe. The very foundations of the moral system, which for nearly twenty centuries has been held in the highest honor, seem to have been shattered. The revolution has not been brought about, however, with the avowed purpose of overthrowing morality itself. Instead of the old theories, new ones have been broached, to advance it to greater perfection than it has ever reached before. A new basis has been laid, on which it is expected to rise with grandeur more astonishing, and new principles have been adopted, which, it is said, will reduce it to better harmony with reason and make it productive of greater and more general happiness.

Can we reasonably compare the crisis in the science of morals to that which has taken place in the science of nature? Are the new ethical tenets in moral philosophy what the system invented by Copernicus and the laws of gravitation discovered by Newton are in astronomy? Thinking men, in answering these questions, will not allow themselves to be carried away by the current of the age. They would look upon them-

selves as disgraced, if anything else than reflection and careful examination should determine their judgment.

The following pages are intended as a help to serious inquiry. To put to the test the work commenced by the aspiring philosophy of to-day, they will set forth to the view of the reader the ancient basis to be destroyed, and the new one to be substituted for it as a support of the moral order.

THE AUTHOR.

BUFFALO, N. Y., *Jan.* 6, 1894.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In preparing this edition special care has been taken to correct inaccuracies and remove obscurities. The author gladly takes this opportunity of thanking his critics for the kindness and indulgence with which they have reviewed the first edition.

July 19, 1897.

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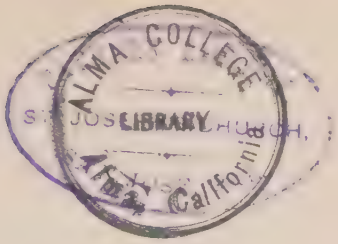

THE DATA OF MODERN ETHICS.

CHAPTER I.

THE DRIFT OF THE NEW ETHICAL THEORIES.

1. As mankind cannot exist without morality, no philosophical system can ever be complete without an ethical theory.
2. Modern philosophy especially needs to be supplemented by ethics, because its skeptical tendencies seem to be destructive of morality.
3. Notwithstanding such tendencies, modern thinkers have devised moral theories which, as they allege, elevate morality as much as their scientific researches promote the knowledge of nature.
4. The new ethics, resting on atheistical positions, has to encounter Christian ethics. It is expected to succeed chiefly through its influence on education.
5. It is the object of the present inquiry to examine from a philosophical point of view the basis of morals laid by modern thought and to contrast it with the basis laid by Christian ethics.

1. Morality is of absolute necessity for mankind, being a constituent of human existence, both individual and social. Devoid of it, man would wantonly waste his life, and society would come to universal destruction. This is undoubtedly the reason why no philosophical school has as yet existed which, how-

ever destructive its tendencies may have been, did not devise some moral theory.

Hence it is, also, that mankind has always been most deeply interested in this department of philosophy. Moral speculation, unlike metaphysical, does not soar in the clouds of abstraction, but descends to the realities of human life. Its conclusions directly touch matters of vital importance; for they regard our property, which they settle or unsettle; they impose on us, or relieve us of, important duties; they enlarge our freedom or reduce us to slavery; they increase or diminish the powers of government, and dictate the laws by which we are to be ruled. Moral theories, therefore, are, in general, not looked upon by the public as irrelevant, but are eagerly embraced or indignantly rejected, according as they agree or disagree with its views and aspirations. Many a philosophical system has met with popular approbation or disapproval because of its ethical principles.

2. We need not wonder, then, that the modern schools of positivists and agnostics have advanced moral theories. They were compelled to do so; for otherwise their philosophical systems would be incomplete. What is of still greater importance, they had wrought utter destruction in the fields of thought. They had denied the existence of an infinitely wise Creator of the universe, repudiated the essential distinction between man and brute, and professed to regard as fictitious all supra-organic or spiritual intellection, all power not arising from matter and not acting according to material laws. But not even matter itself was left unassailed. At first glorified and invested with unwonted attributes, it was soon reduced

to the meagre reality of successive phenomena. Nature was well-nigh annihilated. So, also, was the world of thought. The possibility of reaching ultimate causes, intrinsic or extrinsic, or of attaining to necessary universal principles being denied, our knowledge was restricted to impressions experienced, compared, and classified. The question then naturally presented itself to every thinking mind—Is not the moral world, like so many other things, done away with by the new speculations, and are not its very foundations completely shattered? If such misgivings could not be dispelled, the fate of the new philosophy would be sealed: a general acceptance of it could not be hoped for. No matter what its achievements in science were, or in the extension of our knowledge of nature, its position concerning the supersensible could not but be considered as fraught with the worst consequences.

Thus it came to pass that in France A. Comte and after him H. Lafitte, in England J. Stuart Mill, F. Harrison, Herbert Spencer, Professor Huxley, A. Bain, Professor Clifford, the most prominent champions of positive and agnostic thought, betook themselves to ethical speculation. A difficult task, indeed, was theirs. On the frail reality of phenomena and sensible experience, which alone was yet unchallenged by the skepticism of our century, they had to erect a system of morality strong enough to withstand all the assaults of human passions and to uphold universal peace and order. It was as if they undertook to build castles on airy clouds.

3. But these master spirits felt themselves equal to the task: nor did they for a moment doubt that they would perform it satisfactorily. Not only were

they sure that morality was compatible with their theories: they were confident, even, that they would raise it to supreme perfection. As they pretended to have corrected, by their method of inquiry, the scientific errors of former times, and to have shed a new light on the mysterious laws of nature, so they now thought to overcome ancient ignorance in morals by their investigations. They had, as they imagined, exterminated notions and principles which were the offspring of mere abstractions, and substituted for them tangible and solid experience; they had set aside the supra-mundane Creator, supposed in barbarous and uncivilized ages to be the cause of the visible universe, and had retraced all phenomena to the intrinsic forces of nature as their last origin. So, likewise, they now undertook to base the moral order, not on the will of an invisible Lawgiver, but on the necessary laws of a beneficent nature, and to point out by their rules of conduct a sure way to happiness to be enjoyed, not in an uncertain future life, but during our actual earthly existence.

4. The code of Christian morals has on this account become the chief object of their attacks. The Christian mind instinctively has recourse to the supra-mundane and immaterial, derives human actions from a spiritual soul as its only adequate source, and looks up to an unseen God as the cause of all being, and the ultimate end of all aspirations. Considering this form of thought as the main support of ancient error and ignorance, and, consequently, as the cause of a lower degree of civilization, they propose to supersede it by the more enlightened views of evolutionary or positive philosophy. The conflict between the uphold-

ers of the old and the new code of morality must, to all seeming, become very vehement. As the great mass of civilized man is Christian, and as no one who embraces Christian belief can remain an indifferent spectator while he beholds his dearest and most sacred interests at stake, his deepest convictions ridiculed, and his fondest hopes derided, a united Christendom will offer a valiant resistance to the destructive efforts of its assailants.

On the other hand, the new philosophy is well provided with means of attack. It pushes ahead by the side, and under the protection, of progressing science. It has the press at its disposal, and it is thus enabled to reach all classes of people through books and periodicals; it has entered the schools, and is about to lay hold of education. Its prospects, in this regard, are highly promising; for while it is a characteristic tendency of our age to deliver education into the hands of the State, it is no less so to proclaim tolerance for all phases of religious belief. No civil law would now be tolerated privileging any particular creed, political rights being deemed altogether independent of religious convictions. Such being the condition of things, the State must impart education separate from all religion. For were it to compel youth to its schools and to imbue them with the conviction of any particular denomination, it would infringe the rights of all others; were it to insist only on some fundamental principles, it would trench on the rights of those who want their children brought up according to the tenets of a particular creed, as well as of those who want to keep them free from any religious influence.

And yet education must of necessity aim at morality. This is an axiomatic truth admitted by none more freely than by the State and those charged with educational responsibility. What would be the condition of a State whose citizens would be exempt from moral duties, or of a school whose pupils should be freed from the restraint of moral obligation? The necessary consequence flowing from these politico-social conditions is that morality, like education, must be non-religious.

Such being the logical outcome of the two main political dogmas of our time—State education and universal religious toleration,—the need was earnestly felt of a philosophical theory which should invent a morality without a religion. Here the new philosophy steps in and propounds a system worthy of the highest commendation,—a system, we are told, in full harmony with the enlightenment of the age and the wonderful achievements of modern science, devised by the most prominent thinkers, and especially adapted to educational needs by one most eminent in that school of thought.[1] Will not this offer be gratefully accepted, and the new system be widely adopted in preference to old teachings? And when adopted, will it not work most momentous changes in society?

The new system of ethics has not merely grand projects: it has even achieved great success. Christian morals have nowadays lost much of their ancient prestige: and many cultured minds, blinded by the glare of the new revelation, look upon belief in God, submission to His will, retribution in a life to come, as obsolete superstitions, and willingly grant to the

[1] Education, Intellectual, Moral and Physical, by Herbert Spencer.

self-evolving material universe the glorious attributes they deny to the Deity.

5. The object of the following chapters is to analyze and examine the new ethics set forth by positivists and agnostics, and to contrast it with that of the Christian ages which it is said to have supplanted. The reader should bear well in mind, however, that, by Christian ethics, we do not mean a code of revealed moral precepts, but a system of moral laws which may be deduced by reason from self-evident principles and from the very nature of things—but by reason developed and matured under the influence of Christianity, and no longer groping in the darkness of the pre-Christian era. We shall compare these two systems of morals, not from a theological, but from a philosophical point of view; for they are opposed to each other chiefly under this aspect. The new moralists, denying the very possibility of a divine, supernatural revelation, condemn the ethics of the Christian ages as being repugnant to reason and based on assumptions and principles inconsistent with human nature.

Nor shall we discuss the particular moral duties in detail. Modern ethical speculation, being of recent date, has not yet had time to mark them out. Thus far scarcely more than the basis has been laid, and this forms the centre of discussion in our day. Accordingly we shall call to test only the groundwork of the new and the ancient system of morals, and examine only the foundations upon which each of them erects the order of right and duty. We shall inquire into which of them, recognizing the true nature of man, holds up to him the ultimate end corresponding to his innate tendencies, teaches him to distinguish good from evil and

virtue from vice, urges him by sacred obligation and effective sanction to strive for the one and to shun the other, proposes to him the true moral ideals that attract him to the highest forms of perfection, and offer a solid foundation to justice and mutual love, the twin bonds of human society. These are the questions we have to treat. Answering them, we shall arrive at the data, the fundamental truths, of ethics now so eagerly sought after, and in the light so gained we shall see whether the old Christian theory has in reality decayed in the course of ages, and whether modern thought has erected a new basis on which a superstructure of pure morality may be safely built.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORAL AGENT AND THE MORAL ACT.

6. The nature of the moral agent and the moral act must be determined before any moral theory can be laid down.
7. According to the positive and agnostic view man is supreme and absolutely independent, and yet a merely organic being, the highest of mammals.
8. His will is not free, and his soul is not immortal.
9. Freedom and immortality, if asserted by modern philosophers, have a meaning quite different from that which they had heretofore.
10. The presuppositions, therefore, fundamental to the new ethics are materialistic.
11. Accordingly, the moral act is merely organic and is found, though in an incipient degree, also in brutes: it is the act perfectly adjusted to ends which subserve the maintenance of life, individual, tribal and national.
12. According to Christian ethics man is created and dependent on his Creator, yet his nature is God's likeness, his soul is spiritual and immortal, his will is free, and his free act is the moral act.
13. God is not inconceivable, nor is He a fiction: His idea is obtained from the perfections, and His existence is proved from the existence, of this visible universe.
14. Nor is the spirituality of the soul fictitious: it is proved from the simplicity and immateriality of its acts.
15. The freedom of the will is an undeniable fact, which is fully accounted for by ancient philosophy, though its certainty is by no means dependent on philosophical explanations.

6. Medical science would unquestionably never arrive at any safe conclusion concerning the preser-

vation of health or the healing of diseases, were it not conversant with the several organs of the human body, their proper functions and complicated interdependence. Anatomy, therefore, and physiology are the first of its branches, the basis of all others. Even so moral science, in order to lay down the rules of right conduct, must first of all embrace the knowledge of human nature, its faculties and operations. To determine proper conduct, it is necessary to know man's ultimate end, because our actions are essentially right or wrong by their intrinsic relations to it; and to find out man's end, it is needful to comprehend his nature, because the former is clearly manifested by the tendencies implanted in the latter. How, then, could the philosopher, not knowing the intrinsic constitution of the moral agent and the essential properties of the moral act, mark out moral duties? Would that, in these preliminaries, there were harmony between the old and the new ethics; we should then have, at least, a common point from which to start, and some common principles from which to reason. But unfortunately there exists no such community of fundamental views. There is even here a gulf between the two schools which separates them as widely as the ocean divides the old and the new continent.

7. Man, as considered by positivists and agnostics, is supreme and absolutely independent. There is no ruler above him who controls him by laws, no deity distinct from the universe, no omniscient and infinitely just being that holds him responsible for his actions. For he is the most perfect of all beings, the climax of evolution; the eternal and self-existent

power that gave him existence, life, and perfection, being intrinsic to him. Yet, at the same time, man is, as Herbert Spencer says,[1] but the highest of mammals evolved from lower forms of existence. He is no more than an organic being, endowed with no higher than organic faculties, subject in all his actions to physical and organic laws. In a word, he is distinct from the brute, not in kind, but in degree only. His intellect is but imagination highly cultivated, fitted in a special manner to reproduce sensuous impressions and, thus reproduced, to compare and classify them. It, consequently, does not go beyond phenomena, assorted and reduced to order according to certain laws of sequence. Immaterial entities are not realities grasped by the intellect, but fictions of fancy. Nor is the nature of the will different. Its object is the sensual good, that which is apprehended by the internal senses and agrees with organic nature. Good which is spiritual and immaterial, is unperceived, unreal, and fictitious.

8. If such is human nature, freedom must be and is, in fact, denied. An organism, and more we are not according to the modern view, is subject to laws which necessitate action and leave to the agent, when all conditions requisite for action are present, no possibility, no choice, to act or not to act, to act so or to act otherwise. Man, therefore, is not self-determining, but is determined by the strongest motive apprehended, by the most forcible impulse received, by the most powerful feelings awakened, and by habits inherited or acquired. Or, as Mr. Spencer puts it, and indeed all must admit that know no other than

[1] Data of Ethics, § 4.

material forces, the human will, whether social or individual, moves, like matter, always in the line of the greatest attraction or the least resistance. Freedom is looked on by him as the abolition of law, as the destruction of science, as a deception both subjective and objective.[2] Professor Huxley thinks free will is incompatible with the principle of causation.

"If physical science," he says, "in strengthening our belief in the universality of causation and abolishing chance as an absurdity, leads to the conclusions of determinism, it does no more than follow the track of consistent and logical thinkers in philosophy and theology before it existed or was thought of. Whoever accepts the universality of the law of causation as a dogma of philosophy, denies the existence of uncaused phenomena. And the essence of that which is improperly called the free-will doctrine is that occasionally, at any rate, human volition is self-caused, that is to say, not caused at all: for to cause oneself one must have anteceded oneself—which is, to say the least of it, difficult to imagine."[3]

Need I say that the immortality also of the human soul is contradicted by the evolutionists? If we are but the highest of the mammals, we shall die like any other mammal, and, our organism dissolved, there is no soul to survive. Materialistic theories deny the soul itself as a reality distinct from the body.

9. Yet, though these recent philosophers emphatically disavow the immortality of the soul and free will as conceived of old, they are not loath to embrace freedom and immortality in another meaning. Freedom is for them but spontaneity. They identify free action with voluntary action and then explain the nature of the latter from its opposition to automatic

[2] Principles of Psychology, §§ 18–21.

[3] Fortnightly Review, 1886, December, p. 799.

action. Automatic action is directly the effect of external impulses and hence can be submitted to calculation; voluntary action directly responds to internal impulses, though in accordance with habits generated by contact with environment. Therefore, as a result of the complex individual adjustment of the agent, it is of a more or less unknown origin and cannot be calculated. This peculiar property of volition, its unknowable issue from within the agent, is what, they think, must be taken for freedom. In no other sense can A. Comte be understood, when he maintains freedom against the philosophers of the modern school. He means by it the influence exercised by the intellect on the other faculties; yet the intellect is, in his theory, but organic, as life in general, human and sub-human, is but reciprocity between the organism and its environment, an uninterrupted process of decomposition and recomposition, according to the universal, though somewhat modified, laws of matter.[4] The founder of positivism and his followers, whatever language they may use, are in full concert.

In like manner has the notion of immortality been transformed. Though the individual ceases to exist, still the sum total of all the forces inherent in the universe never goes out of existence; even motion always remains the same in quantity. Hence, the effects produced by man in this world do not perish with his death, but continue to exist either in their own, or in another form, into which they will be con-

[4] See Auguste Comte, Der Begründer des Positivismus, by H. Gruber S. J., Freiburg, Herder, 1889. This excellent treatise gives a very exact and comprehensive idea of A. Comte's philosophy.

verted, whilst he himself, reduced to ashes, preserves an ideal existence in the memory of posterity. Such is true immortality, glorious and consoling, and at the same time certain and verifiable by science.

"Can we," says F. Harrison, "conceive a more potent stimulus to rectitude, to daily and hourly striving after a true life, than this ever present sense that we are indeed immortal, not that we have an immortal something within us, but that in very truth we ourselves, our thinking, feeling, acting personalities are immortal?

"As we live *for others* in life, so we live *in others* after death. . . . . How deeply does such a belief as this bring home to each moment of life the mysterious perpetuity of ourselves! For good, for evil, we cannot die. We cannot shake ourselves free from this eternity of our faculties." . . . . "The humblest life that ever turned a sod sends a wave—no, more than a wave, a life—through the ever-growing harmony of human society."[5]

The same idea of immortality is expressed in the following verses of George Eliot:

> "Oh may I join the choir invisible
> Of these immortal dead who live again
> In lives made better by their presence. So
> To live is heaven."[6]

10. From the explanations given it will appear that the first presuppositions of the new ethics are all materialistic, as indeed we have termed them thus far. But Professor Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and many other positivists and agnostics complain that they are misrepresented as materialists, thus to be exposed to the odium of the civilized world. According to their statement, they teach just as little materialism, as they embrace spiritualism, because they have not

[5] Quoted from The New Paul and Virginia, by W. H. Mallock. Appendix.

[6] Quoted from Is Life Worth Living? by W. H. Mallock, p. 73.

lowered spirit to matter, but elevated matter to spirit. Before their time matter had been made the opprobrium of the Creator, its real capacities being ignored. It was thought to be the cause of physical phenomena only, as motion, attraction, and repulsion; but, by the researches of modern science it has been found to be the cause also of psychical phenomena, of cognition, feeling, and emotion. It is no longer what it was formerly taken to be; it has risen to a higher rank, being now the source and cause of all, of both mind and material nature. This is the position held chiefly by the new monistic philosophy, which weds materialism with idealism by assuming the units of matter to be sensations or feelings. Grand as such views at first sight appear to some, they vanish away like phantoms as soon as the scientific proofs adduced in their support are closely examined into. When Herbert Spencer and Professor Huxley attempt to analyze psychical phenomena, they find them to result from merely material forces, from repulsion and attraction, by complicate combinations, and consequently to differ from those that are called physical, as crystal does from lime, rather in degree than in kind. Nor could they arrive at any other conclusion, after they were determined to admit nothing but what is reached through the senses, and what is evolved by an internal process from the lowest form of existence. In spite of their pretensions, their immunity from materialism is merely verbal. In reality, and with this point alone we are here concerned, their theories are as materialistic as those of the Ionian and Epicurean school of old.

11. The nature of the moral agent not rising above

matter and its forces, what then is the moral act? Herbert Spencer gives us in his Data of Ethics all the explanations that may be desired.[7]

The acts, he tells us, with which ethics deals, and which consequently are peculiar to the moral agent, are conduct completely evolved. Conduct, in general, is the adjustment of acts to ends, or acts adjusted to ends; the adjustment, however, being supposed to be actually manifested, and the acts to be visible, since vital coördinations which are merely internal do not belong to morals, but to physiology. Completely evolved conduct is perfect adjustment of acts to ends which subserve the maintenance of self, of the race, and of society, or of individual, tribal and national life. Implying, as it evidently must, a very complicated combination of perfectly developed faculties and vital functions, it can be found only where evolution has reached its ultimate stage. It is, consequently, the most highly-evolved conduct of the most highly-evolved being, the conduct peculiar to man. However, though moral conduct is the highest, it does not exclude ascending degrees, both men and nations being unequally developed; nor is it inconceivable that, in a rudimentary state, it should be found also in brutes. On the contrary, according to the evolutionary theory, the powers and qualities that render it possible must, like all other human capacities, pre-exist, though inferior in degree, in the lower animal organisms, in the same manner as the perfections of the adult individual are, though undeveloped, precontained in his earlier stages of existence. The farther brutes have advanced in evolution, the more they resemble man also in

[7] Chaps. i., ii.

morality—the smaller is the difference between their conduct and his.

"The following proposition," says Ch. Darwin, "seems to me in a high degree probable—namely, that any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man." . . . "In the same manner as various animals have some sense of beauty, though they admire widely different objects, so they might have a sense of right and wrong, though led by it to follow widely different lines of conduct."[8]

It is evidently in full harmony with views like these that Herbert Spencer speaks of subhuman justice and subhuman morality; that Ch. Darwin himself, and with him Brehm and other scientists look with awe and admiration on the moral virtues manifested by several brutes; and that A. Comte wishes many an ape, dog, or horse to be incorporated in the grand being, Humanity, because more deserving by their noble conduct of such an honor than degenerated human beings.

The moral act, then, so we must conclude from the explanations given, is, though highest in perfection, still but organic; though consequent on superior perception, yet not free, but necessary; though proceeding from internal feelings and emotions, yet external, and visible; though adjusted to the highest end of all, nevertheless aiming only at the maintenance of man's earthly and mortal life. Such, indeed, it must be, if the best-developed organism is regarded as the highest being, and the best-evolved organic function as the highest operation.

12. After this brief exposition of evolutionary

[8] Descent of Man, chap. iii., Moral Sense.

views, let us turn to Christian ethics. What is man, the moral agent, according to its fundamental tenets? The very reverse of what he is thought to be by the recent schools of philosophy. He is not supreme and independent, but, on the contrary, in every respect dependent on the personal Deity that has created him, and subject to its law and will. But he is not therefore a being of inferior perfection. By his nature he towers immeasurably above the rest of creation, being different from brutes not merely in degree, but in kind. He is the likeness of the Divinity itself, because animated by a rational, immaterial, and immortal soul—that is, by a cognitive principle not composed of matter, nor inherent in the body or directly dependent on it: by a substance simple, spiritual, not subject to death or dissolution. Accordingly, his intellect, too, is not an organic, but an immaterial or spiritual faculty, and as such it transcends sensuous experience, penetrates the nature of things, grasps eternal truths and universal principles, reaches the infinite, the supreme and ultimate cause. His will, likewise immaterial, is made for the good as such, hence for good in general, for all good, for good unlimited. This boundless scope exempts the will from necessity and allows it freedom of action with regard to any particular object; and again the freedom of will, its dominion and self-determination, renders man responsible for his actions, which are imputable, not to his organic dispositions or to organic laws, but to his own free choice.

Now, it is this free act of the will that is termed in Christian ethics the moral act, or the human act, it being peculiar to man, and shared in no way, not even rudimentarily, by any creature below him. As to its

properties, it is, among all the acts of which creation is capable, the highest; yet it does not result from the gradual evolution of material nature; it springs from a principiant, which, descending from on high, unites itself with matter. Because spiritual, the moral act is internal and invisible, yet it controls our external acts, and so imparts to them moral worth. Owing to its spiritual nature, it is not primarily and chiefly directed to earthly objects, though secondarily it regards them, too; its ultimate goal is the eternal and divine.

13. The moral act, thus explained by Christian philosophers, is to the modern mind inconceivable, if not absurd, so much have the very ideas on which it is based been obscured, and so utterly have the fundamental tenets which it presupposes been misrepresented. It will, therefore, be necessary to add a few words in defence and explanation of the Christian view. We are told by Herbert Spencer that the notion of a divine being, the ultimate ground of Christian morality, originated in the imagination of savages, representing to themselves in nightly dreams their deceased ancestors. Has he never read how, according to Christian philosophy, the human mind forms the idea of God; how it first, from the contemplation of the universe, arrives at the knowledge of wisdom, goodness, power, beauty; how then it frees these perfections from all deficiency, dependence, and potentiality, and removes from them thus cleared all limitation, so as to conceive a being unproduced and infinite; and how at last, by reasoning, it infers all the attributes proper to the self-existent nature?[9]

[9] St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, p. i. qq. 12, 13.

And has he not yet learned how the existence of this Supreme Being is proved? Is he unacquainted with a line of reasoning like the following?

The things we daily observe in this world of ours are produced, because they commence their existence; they are contingent, because they may or may not exist; they are changeable, because they constantly increase and decrease, grow and decay; yet, notwithstanding these imperfections, they are reducible each to a well-ordered whole, and all to one well-concerted system. But the principle of causation admitted, which, indeed, cannot be denied, and least of all by men of science, all that so exists must at last be traced back to a sufficient cause not caused and dependent itself; the things, therefore, produced to a being self-existent, and the things contingent and changeable to a being absolutely necessary and unchangeable, the things ordered to a being most wise and intelligent, to whose power all is subject.[10]

True, these reasons for the existence of a personal Deity are not new, they are old, nearly as old as Greek civilization; but they have been reconsidered in all ages and by the greatest geniuses, and they have not only stood the test, but rather have, in the course of time, gained yet greater strength by examination. Nor have the modern philosophers undone them; they have either completely ignored them or wrested them from their meaning. In truth, then, it is not imagination or ignorance that has created the Deity, it is reason, even when most cultivated, that imperatively requires it as the sole sufficient cause of the universe.

14. The immaterial soul, the formal constituent of

[10] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., p. i. qu. 2, art. 3.

the moral agent and the principiant of the moral act, is no less than God regarded by the new philosophy as an ancient fiction. Whether with good reasons or otherwise, a short inquiry will show us. We represent to ourselves in thought objects which are simple, indivisible, and immaterial, as, for instance, unity, relation, being, God; we compare our notions and cognitions in order to form judgments and reasonings; we perceive the relations, the identity or distinction, the likeness or unlikeness of objects presented to us; we are cognizant of our own selves and our actions past and present, of our perceptions and volitions. These are undeniable facts attested by our consciousness, and cannot be gainsaid even by a skeptic without self-contradiction. Now if we analyze these mental operations and search into what is necessarily implied in their very possibility, we arrive with full certainty at the following conclusions:

Acts which express or represent immaterial objects are immaterial themselves, for a material form is not the likeness of a form not material; and acts by which we perfectly turn back upon ourselves cannot proceed from an organic faculty, because matter, which is an essential constituent of every organism, cannot operate but on a subject distinct from itself. In like manner, a cognitive principle that represents the uncompounded and the indivisible, or compares objects perceived, or its own acts, and judges of their relation to one another, or, reflecting on itself, perceives its own identity under divers phenomena, is of necessity simple. For the compound cognitive principle cannot, by its extended act, represent the indivisible and unextended, or represent many as one and identical, or

apprehend itself as one and the self-same. Did every part of it represent that which is indivisible, or perceive the identity of the objects compared, or reflect on itself, there would be in us no more one single, but many selves, and many subjects endowed with cognition and judgment. Did, on the contrary, every part of the cognitive principle perceive but one part of the object, or but one of the many objects to be compared, or but one portion of the entire self, no comparison would be possible, nor could oneness or identity ever be conceived: just as when many persons read each only a part of a book, a judgment of the whole is not possible by any one."[11]

There are, consequently, simple and immaterial acts and faculties, and, as a subject in which they reside and from which they spring, there exists a simple and immaterial intellectual principle, and this, since it animates us as our formal constituent, is rightly called our rational soul, and is, because it cannot be dissolved, of its very nature immortal. The existence, then, of man's immortal spirit rests on solid grounds; it is a conclusion as certain as any drawn by science. The psychical phenomena, the facts revealed by consciousness, absolutely require it. The scientific researches of our age have not made it unnecessary, just as they did not do away with the eternal Deity. That human thought or volition is in reality but a material process, no scientist has yet demonstrated; none even pretends to have succeeded in demonstrating it; nay, the most prominent among them openly profess the impossibility of such a demon-

[11] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., p. i. qu. 75; Summa contra Gentiles, lib. ii., cp. 48, 50, 79.

stration. All that science has done consists in showing a constant connection between mental acts and bodily functions. This connection is undeniable; yet connection is one thing and identity another. Cause and effect, parent and offspring, sunshine and vegetation are necessarily correlated and connected; but nobody will therefore deny their respective distinction. So likewise it cannot be inferred that thought and motion, soul and body, are identical, because they are connected.

15. Lastly, we see an essential quality of the moral act, its freedom, seriously contested by our recent philosophers. Some regard it as an intrinsic impossibility, whilst others deem it irreconcilable with other accepted tenets, as for instance, the omniscience or omnipotence of God, or at any rate unaccountable and beset with inextricable difficulties. In reply but a few remarks are needed. Prof. Huxley, who is of the opinion that a free act is an uncaused act and, therefore, inconsistent with the principle of causation, might be undeceived even by the illiterate. Anybody could tell him that a free human act is caused with adequate power by the subject in which it exists. His objection is, to say the least, altogether unworthy of a man of learning. As to the origin and nature of freedom, they have, indeed, been explained and accounted for by Christian philosophers and reconciled with every other tenet of their systems. St. Thomas Aquinas, *e. g.*, derives the freedom of choice, on the one hand, from the will's proper and peculiar object, which is good as such, good in general and unlimited, and, on the other hand, from the power of the intellect, which is able to discover the imperfections and deficiencies

of any particular object presented to us, and therefore to propose it to the will, though under different aspects, as good and evil at the same time.[12]

The admission, however, of freedom ought not to be made dependent on any theory. Whether there is free will or not is a question of fact, and facts are proved by experience, as modern science never ceases to tell us. Millions of phenomena occur in nature and come into daily contact with us, though accounted for by no theory. The self-determination of the will, free from any necessity, is attested by our consciousness so clearly, so distinctly, so constantly, that it is not even in our power to deny it, and that philosophical explanations will succeed neither in shaking nor in substantially enhancing our conviction concerning its existence. Christian philosophy, therefore, holds an impregnable position when it maintains the freedom of the act peculiar to the human will, the moral act.

To those who, notwithstanding the explanations given, look on God, on the immaterial soul, and the freedom of will as *unthinkable*, as bare absurdities blindly believed in by dark and ignorant ages, we should like, before concluding, to propose a few questions. How has mankind attained its present greatness and perfection? How has it so wonderfully extended its knowledge, so well organized society and promoted general welfare? How did integrity, justice, benevolence, rise and grow among men? Did the human race arrive at such astonishing results in the supposition that human nature was not more than a highly developed organism, devoid of a spiritual

[12] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., p. i., qu. 83; i.-ii., qu. 14, art. 6.

soul, an immaterial intellect, and free will? If we are to rely on history, society prospered because wise lawgivers, rulers, and educators, while they considered man to be a free intelligent being, induced him by laws, by precepts and admonitions, by rewards and punishments, to abstain from evil and to do good by his own choice. Virtues have flourished, because the soul was thought to survive the body, and because God, infinitely holy and just, was conceived at once as the prototype and source of all goodness, and as the judge and rewarder of all our actions in a life to come. Knowledge progressed, because man was conscious of an intellectual power within himself, competent to inquire into truths imperceptible to the senses, and to penetrate beyond the changeable and the finite to the immutable, eternal, and infinite. Is it possible that mankind should have so far intellectually and morally advanced, though completely ignoring human nature and resting its progress on false and inconceivable suppositions? Let materialistic philosophy give an answer to these questions.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW THEORIES OF THE ULTIMATE END.

16. The ultimate end is that which is willed for itself and for which all other ends are willed.
17. According to the new moralists complete life is the ultimate end of all human action.
18. Yet life is not desirable but as far as it is pleasurable, and is not completed but by pleasurable acts. Consequently the ultimate end proposed to the will coincides with happiness consisting in the fullness of pleasure, or in an existence exempt as far as possible from pain and as rich as possible in enjoyments; pain and pleasure being understood to be merely organic.
19. The happiness regarded by Herbert Spencer as the ultimate end is personal. This will, however, be complete only in the normal state of mankind.
20. Before this state is reached, the ultimate end to be pursued shall consist in the greatest possible surplus of pleasure over pain to be obtained by the use of means conducive to happiness, their use affording the pleasure of pursuit.
21. The happiness regarded by the utilitarians as the ultimate end is general. This kind of happiness is at present not attained, yet is thought to be attainable.
22. In the meantime, the ultimate end to be had in view consists in the greatest happiness of the greatest possible number under given circumstances.

16. It is universally admitted that the first subject to be discussed in ethics is man's ultimate end. At this end all our acts must aim, just as all our

steps must be directed to the goal we intend to reach. Tendency to it is moral goodness, deflection from it is moral badness. To it we must trace back all our duties, and from it as from the supreme principle we must deduce all our ethical conclusions. So it becomes necessary always to bear in mind our ultimate end, just as the mariner must constantly keep in view the exact site of the distant port to which he is to steer. Ignoring or mistaking it we shall, as Cicero remarks, wander from truth; but having a clear and certain knowledge of it, we are scarcely liable to error.

The end, in general, may be defined as that in which our desire rests, and which, consequently, is willed for itself, that is, for its own intrinsic goodness and perfection; whereas, on the contrary, that which is not willed for itself, but for some other thing to which it leads, is called a means. But an object may be desirable for itself or for its own intrinsic perfection, and may, in addition, because conducing to a higher end, be wished for also as a means. If a thing is thus presented to us, the will resembles a traveler, who, on his way, sojourns in a town or provincial city to admire its beauty or treasures of art, yet does not make it his final resting-place, the capital being the goal of his journey. There is, however, an end which is willed only for itself and in no way for any other purpose. In it the will rests without any desire of an ulterior object, as the traveler rests in the capital without intending to go farther. This end we call the last or ultimate end. Very appropriately is it defined as that for which all other ends are willed, because every other desire is directed towards it, and

every other end is intended as subservient to it. Furthermore, since good is the proper object and the aim of the will, and the goodness of a thing is that which renders it desirable, the ultimate end coincides with the supreme good or that to which every other good is subordinate, and which itself, being absolutely perfect, is subordinate to none.

One more division of ends is necessary. In all languages one and the self-same term often signifies both the act and the object of the same, both the operation and the effect produced. In like manner, the end may denote not only the thing which by its goodness solicits the will, and when obtained, stills its desire, but also the possession of the said object and the rest of the will in its possession. The thing desired or desirable is the objective, the possession of it the subjective end. An objective end, for instance, is the money wished for by the merchant, a subjective end is wealth, the possession of money. Both ends may, in their own kind, be ultimate or proximate.

17. These definitions premised, we come to the question, in what man's ultimate end consists. As is to be expected, the new and the old ethics arrive in this discussion at conclusions diametrically opposed. It cannot be otherwise after they have laid down contradictory tenets concerning human nature. Let us first propose the new theories.

If, as Herbert Spencer says, moral conduct is perfect adjustment to complete life ; life fully developed in the individual, in the family, and in society, must be the ultimate end of all human action, as it is the end of all evolution. That such indeed is the teach-

ing of Mr. Spencer, we understand from the following words:

"The acts adjusted to ends, which, while constituting the outer visible life from moment to moment, further the continuance of life, we saw become, as evolution progresses, better adjusted; until finally they make the life of each individual entire in length and breadth, at the same time that they efficiently subserve the rearing of young, and do both these not only without hindering other individuals from doing the like, but while giving aid to them in doing the like."[1]

This view is not peculiar to Mr. Spencer, but is common among agnostics and positivists, though not generally expressed so fully and in terms so exact. According to the author of "The Value of Life" the ultimate end to be pursued by man is the largest possible existence, which is humanity or human life as developed in society.[2] A. Comte, the author of French positivism, takes for the ultimate end the progress and perfection of mankind. Accordingly, the life considered by the new philosophical schools as the end of moral action is the most universal, being that of the whole human race, and the best-evolved, being complete in all its functions, particularly in intellection, volition, and æsthetic feelings. This loftiness of final life we are repeatedly warned not to overlook, and we should, undoubtedly, be accused of gross misrepresentation were we not to heed the warning. But, at the same time, truth also requires us not to forget that, however elevated this life may be supposed to be, it is but animal, organic, mortal, and earthly.

18. Life as the end of conduct is an object of the

[1] Data of Ethics, § 15.

[2] The Value of Life: Reply to Mr. Mallock's Essay, Is Life Worth Living? New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1879.

will; for by the will it has to be desired and pursued. The question, therefore, arises, how life presents itself to the will as a desirable object. Only after this question has been answered, can a full and proper expression of the ultimate end be given. Both J. Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer maintain that for the will the pleasurable is the only desirable object.

"I believe," says J. S. Mill, "that to think of an object as desirable (unless for the sake of its consequences), and to think of it as pleasant, are one and the same thing: and that to desire anything, except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant, is a metaphysical impossibility." [3]

Accordingly, life can be desirable only as far as it is pleasurable.[4]

This fundamental tenet Mr. Spencer holds to be in full harmony with his views on life as the end of conduct. Life, animate existence, is, as he thinks, essentially bound up with pleasure; and consequently the pursuit of pleasure is tantamount to the maintenance of life.

"In two ways," he says, "is it demonstrable that there exists a primordial connection between pleasure-giving acts and continuance or increase of life, and, by implication, between pain-giving acts and decrease or loss of life. On the one hand, setting out with the lowest living things, we see that the beneficial acts and the acts which there is a tendency to perform, are originally two sides of the same, and cannot be disconnected without fatal results. On the other hand, if we contemplate developed creatures as now existing, we see that each individual and species is, from day to day, kept alive by pursuit of the agreeable and avoidance of the disagreeable." [5]

Later on he calls attention to another effect of pain and pleasure.

[3] Utilitarianism, chap. iv.
[4] Data of Ethics, § 50.
[5] Ibid., § 33.

"There are connections between pleasure in general and physiological exaltation, and between pain in general and physiological depression. Every pleasure increases vitality, every pain decreases vitality. Every pleasure raises the tide of life, every pain lowers the tide of life..... While there is a benefit to be presently felt by the whole organism from due performance of each function, there is an immediate benefit from the exaltation of its functions at large caused by the accompanying pleasure: and from pains, whether of excess or defect, there also come these double effects, immediate and remote." [6]

The conclusion to be drawn from these premises is obvious. If the end of conduct is the continuance and increase of life, and life essentially depends on the pursuit of pleasure; and if, at the same time, the pleasurable is the only object the will can pursue: the fullness of pleasure is the ultimate end of man. There is, these presuppositions being granted, nothing else in which moral conduct could terminate and the human will could find its final rest. Such is, indeed, the teaching of the new ethics.

"No school," says Mr. Spencer, "can avoid taking for the ultimate moral aim a desirable state of feeling called by whatever name—gratification, enjoyment, happiness." [7]

J. S. Mill, after having defined happiness as pleasure and absence of pain, says:

"According to the Greatest Happiness Principle . . . . the ultimate end with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable (whether we consider our own good or that of other people) is an existence exempt, as far as possible, from pain and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality." [8]

The end of man being thus defined in general outlines, we must further see how the new philosophers

[6] Data of Ethics, § 36.
[7] Ibid., § 16.
[8] Utilitarianism, chap. ii.

come to give a fuller and more detailed description of it, and how in doing so they branch off into diverse schools. The pleasures that make up happiness are all organic. Still after the remark made above concerning the loftiness of ultimately evolved life, it is unnecessary to say that both positivists and agnostics contradict the idea that they place happiness merely in low, sensual gratifications, and do not include in it the highest intellectual enjoyments, nay, these pre-eminently. It would be astonishing if they did not do so, repeating what materialistic philosophy has taught in all former ages.

19. While with regard to these qualities of pleasure the recent philosophers are in full agreement, they utterly disagree when they have to determine whether happiness, consisting in pleasure and taken for man's ultimate end, is personal or general, that of the individual or that of society. From the difference which exists among them on this point, their several systems have derived distinctive names. Hedonism, which is the name given to any ethical theory that takes pleasure for the ultimate end of action, is egoistic or universalistic, according as the pleasure sought is that of the agent himself or that of all men.[9] Herbert Spencer is the champion of egoistic hedonism.

How personal happiness is the ultimate end, and social welfare the proximate end, the latter being a means to the former,[10] he shows in the following line of thought. Perfect happiness, the greatest possible happiness of each and all, coincides with perfect morality, that is, the highest-evolved conduct of the

[9] Data of Ethics, § 57. [10] Ibid., § 49.

highest evolved being. For perfect moral conduct is the perfect adjustment of our actions to the completion of life. But every act perfectly adjusted to its proper end is pleasurable and even purely pleasurable, if the adjustment is altogether complete, as, on the contrary, every act incompletely adjusted is more or less painful. Want of adjustment is the cause of all our pains, and the perfection of it the source of all our happiness. At first man is incompletely adapted to the social state, his self-regarding impulses yet prevailing. Hence, struggles arise in man himself between his egoistic and altruistic instincts, struggles among individuals, the one committing aggressions on the other for egoistic purposes, and, if society is once formed, struggles among different nations. Even when the warlike state has passed by, and peace and industry are fostered, there yet remains for a long time an imperfect adaptation to industrial life, and a disproportion between mankind and the environments from which it derives its means of subsistence. But as evolution ever goes on, adjustments become ever more perfect. At last a state of mankind will come in which wars will be abolished and industry will be predominant. The population will then be in proportion to the means of subsistence afforded, the human organism will be healthy and fitted for the highest intellectual activity, undue egoistic impulses will be habitually restrained, sympathy will be fully developed, and social functions will become spontaneous. Adaptation thus having reached its highest degree, pain will be reduced to its minimum, and every action will yield the purest pleasure.

This is the normal state of mankind, in which all is perfect and every perfection assumes an ideal form, the climax of evolution and of morality, the paradise of happiness, the fullness of the purest pleasures, in which, as in his ultimate end, man shall find his final rest. It is a happiness, however, which, though enjoyed by all, is essentially personal. For, arising as it does from individual adjustments, it is directly the gratification of every one's individual desires and inclinations. Yet co-operation is therefore not excluded, but is, on the contrary, required, both to reach the necessary adjustment and to enjoy beatific bliss. For the requisite adjustment can be attained only in social life, and perfect bliss results, to a great extent, from the pleasures of all shared by each through disinterested sympathy. In short, general happiness refers to special happiness as a means to the end.[11] Such is the new heaven promised by Herbert Spencer, to be enjoyed, not in an uncertain life to come, but on earth in the natural course of things and according to the laws of the visible universe. For evolution in nature has been proved to be a reality, and must in due time bring about a climax of adjustment.

When shall this last stage be reached? We are evidently approaching it. For, are not now wars less frequent, while freedom and industry are in the ascendancy? Still we have not actually reached the goal, nor can it be seen what future generation shall be fortunate enough to arrive there.

20. In the meantime we are not altogether deprived of happiness, nor without an end to pursue. There is

[11] Data of Ethics, §§ 6, 39, 49, 50, 67, 92, 99.

always an attainable surplus of pleasure over pain, changing with the circumstances under which man lives, but constantly growing as evolution progresses. We must always aim during our mortal life at making this surplus as great as possible. This is the end proposed to us, whilst perfect happiness is yet an impossibility. It must be pursued by making the use of the means conducive to happiness our immediate end. By three propositions Mr. Spencer argues this to be the true method of enjoying the greatest possible surplus of pleasure. First, he maintains that the efficient use of means affords of itself a pleasure in addition to that which is derived from the end to which they conduce. He calls this the pleasure of pursuit, and evidences its reality by analysis. Then he shows that the use of the means remotest from the ultimate end affords the greatest of all pleasures, and, lastly, he proves the same means, while they are the remotest and the most pleasurable, to be the nearest or immediate ends.[12] The following is the analysis of the pleasure of pursuit:

"The chief components of this pleasure are: First, a renewed consciousness of personal efficiency (made vivid by actual success and partially excited by impending success), which consciousness of personal efficiency connected in experience with achieved ends of every kind, arouses a vague but massive consciousness of resulting gratifications; and, second, a representation of the applause which recognition of this efficiency by others has before brought, and will again bring."

The remotest means are understood to afford the greatest pleasures from the consideration that "in the course of evolution there has been a superposing of new and more complete sets of means upon older

[12] Data of Ethics, §§ 58, 59.

and simpler sets of means, and a superposing of the pleasures accompanying the uses of these successive sets of means;" that "among the successive sets of means the later are the more remote from the primary end," and hence, "as co-ordinating earlier and simpler means, the more complete and accompanied with feelings which are more representative;" that "each set of means with its accompanying satisfactions eventually becomes in its turn dependent on one originating later than itself," and that therefore "the pleasure attending each set of acts, while making possible the pleasures attending each set of acts which follows, is joined with the representation of this subsequent set of acts and its pleasure, and of the others which succeed in order."

But how can the means, which are the remotest, become an immediate necessary end, as the last of the three propositions asserts?

If the use of means affords of itself a pleasure, it becomes an end. And, if there is a necessary dependence of the end on the use of the means, the latter become necessary ends, which must be pursued before the end can be reached and therefore take precedence in time and imperativeness. And lastly, if there is also an interdependence among the means, each preceding set of them becomes a proximate end, an end which likewise precedes all others. Consequently the remotest means become the nearest, the immediate necessary end.

The doctrine laid down and, in his opinion, established by the three propositions, H. Spencer applies in particular to social life. Society is not the ultimate end of man; its preservation is but a means of

preserving its units. But it is a means altogether necessary; therefore, in the course of evolution, when the use of means is an immediate end of imperative necessity, it becomes a proximate aim taking precedence of the ultimate end, the preservation of individuals, and a source of the happiness attainable in our actual condition.[13]

The theory developed with the display of so much genius forms a principal part of H. Spencer's ethical doctrine. It shows the immediate or proximate end of our present life, the greatest happiness we must strive for and shall attain by incessant exertion. At the same time, reconciling personal and social well-being, it seems to give the solution of the greatest difficulties intrinsic to any hedonistic system.

21. The egoistic view is, however, though most ably advocated, far from being generally entertained. Universalistic hedonism has, from the outset of the new era, been preferred by prominent philosophers, and is also nowadays thought by many to embody a system of more exalted and disinterested morality. As its name implies, it subordinates special to general, individual to social happiness, considering the latter as the ultimate end, and the former as a means conducive to it. Yet, though such, it is not thought to put our personal welfare at a disadvantage. For in the well-being of the whole society, also that of its members is comprised; and, besides, the happiness brought about by common efforts and enjoyed in common is, for the civilized individual, the source of the purest and richest pleasures.

Already Jeremy Bentham (1747–1832) had de-

[13] Data of Ethics, § 49.

vised a system of morals in which the greatest possible happiness of each and all was made the ultimate end of man. A. Comte took up the idea. In his opinion, the welfare and progress of humanity is the end to be had in view by all, and to be pursued even at the sacrifice of all private interests. Conduct so generous and so disinterested will result for mankind in a state of universal happiness. The most perfect social organism will then unite all men in peace, harmony, and plentifulness, mutual love being the spring of all actions and the powerful motive inducing every one to comply with his duties. As soon as mankind shall have universally adopted positivism, this new Jerusalem on earth will rise within a few generations. The principal exponent, however, of utilitarianism, as universalistic hedonism is frequently called, is, at least for the English-speaking world, J. S. Mill. His views on the nature of general happiness are in brief here presented.[14]

We have seen above that by happiness he means an existence exempt as far as possible from pain and as rich as possible in enjoyments, and that he gives this happiness so wide a generality as to extend it to all sentient creation. Analyzing happiness, he denies that it consists in a continuous state of pleasurable excitement.

"If by happiness is meant a continuity of highly pleasurable excitement, it is evident enough that this is impossible. A state of exalted pleasure lasts only moments, or in some cases, and with some intermissions, hours or days, and is the occasional brilliant flash of enjoyment, not its permanent and steady flame. Of this the philosophers who have taught that happiness was the end of life were as fully aware as those who taunt

[14] Utilitarianism, chap. ii.

them. The happiness which they meant was not a life of rapture: but moments of such, in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with a decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as a foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing."

Rather its main constituents are, as he thinks, tranquillity and excitement, either of which is sufficient for the purpose; and there is no inherent impossibility to unite them, since they are in natural alliance.

Such an existence, composed of tranquillity and excitement, "is even now the lot of many during some considerable portion of their lives." But, as he concedes, "it is not attained by nineteen-twentieths of mankind even in these parts of our present world, which are least deep in barbarism, and a long succession of generations will yet perish," before it can be reached by the whole of the human race; the cause of the failure lying solely in our present wretched education and in our miserable social arrangements.

22. In the meantime, whilst happiness cannot be universally attained, the end to be pursued by human action is, according to the utilitarian view, the greatest happiness of the greatest possible number under given circumstances; happiness being taken for the pleasure of sense and of understanding with immunity from pain, or, as some put it, for the surplus of pleasure over pain, such as our actual existence is capable of yielding.

If the superiority of the new ethics over Christian morals is asserted, the assertion is made in favor of utilitarianism with special force. It is this doctrine that is said to have awakened in the human heart kind and charitable feelings and pure, disinterested

motives of action, and to be productive not only of the most substantial, but also of the most universal good.[15]

[15] J. Stuart Mill complains that the term *Utility* is frequently misinterpreted, to create a prejudice against his system. "Utility," says he, "is often summarily stigmatized as an immoral doctrine, giving it the name of expediency and taking advantage of the popular use of that term to contrast it with principle. But the Expedient, in the sense in which it is opposed to the Right, generally means that which is expedient for the particular interest of the agent himself, as when a man sacrifices the interest of his country to keep himself in place. When it means anything better than this, it means that which is expedient for some immediate object, some temporary purpose, but which violates a rule whose observance is expedient in a much higher degree. The Expedient, in this sense, instead of being the same with the useful, is a branch of the hurtful."—Utilitarianism, chap. ii.

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASURE NOT THE ULTIMATE END.

23. Modern hedonism is based ultimately on materialism, and proximately on the evolutionary theory. Materialism has been condemned long ago.
24. There is no evolution in the human race, that is, no constant growth in life, bound to terminate sooner or later in the fullness of pleasure.
25. Happiness, if merely organic, does not include intellectual or æsthetical pleasures.
26. Nor can it be conceived as an end to be attained in the future, if man is merely an organism.
27. It is, if consisting in pleasure, and particularly in organic pleasure, essentially personal and egoistic.
28. Hence the utilitarians and agnostics, proposing happiness as man's ultimate end, entangle themselves in endless self-contradictions.
29. Organic pleasure, being limited in kind and duration, and moreover uncertain, affords no rest to the human will.
30. Fullness of pleasure with exemption from pain is never attainable to mankind.
31. Also a relative surplus of pleasure over pain is by many thought to be impossible.
32. But even if it be possible, it is rendered unknowable by the theory of utilitarians.
33. And no less by that of Herbert Spencer.
34. Hedonistic theories not only fail to define man's end, but deny every ultimate end.

23. Let novelty be no objection to the hedonistic theories. They are of no recent date. Earthly pleas-

ures were not for the first time in our days thought to be man's ultimate destiny. This idea was cherished by the philosophical schools of the Cyrenaics and Epicureans, and widely adopted in the heathen world previous to the Christian era. But diametrically opposed as it was to Christianity, it could not but be held in utter abhorrence during the Christian ages. What we are interested in knowing and inquiring into is whether hedonism, rescued from long oblivion and restored by modern science, is based on a safe foundation, built up harmoniously and maintained by reason so as to be a firmer support to morality than Christian ethics. In particular we have to discuss the question whether by the new doctrine the ultimate end is based on certain and solid grounds, which set its reality beyond all doubt, and vested with all the attributes necessary to render it the supreme object of human action.

Modern hedonism is based ultimately on materialism and proximately on the evolutionary theory. Of materialism we need not treat here at any length; it has been often enough discussed by able writers. One remark will suffice. Whatever reasons, advanced by the greatest intellects of all civilized ages, prove the existence of the personal Deity and the immortality of the human soul, disprove the materialistic view. Materialism, on the other hand, is utterly incompetent to weaken the theistic position in any way. Science cannot give it any support; for, being confined to material phenomena, it is completely silent about the supra-mundane. The new philosophy is equally powerless; relying, as it does, entirely on experience and disowning all universal and abstract

principles, it is absolutely unable to draw any conclusions for or against the existence of the immaterial.

24. Nor need we enter on a discussion of the evolutionary theory. Being concerned with mankind alone, we may content ourselves with an inquiry into human progress. Can we discover any certain and reliable traces of evolution in the course of centuries?

As history opens before our eyes, we do not find barbarians advancing from savagery to civilization. At the very outset are presented to our view the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians, with stupendous monuments of architecture, with remarkable literary productions and military exploits. The barbarism of the first man is an assumption of some scientists supported by no historical facts. Not even the fossil man of prehistoric times is without some culture. If we consider the particular nations which were the chief supporters of civilization, we, indeed, observe in them, first, a progress generally traceable to influence from without; but a certain stage once reached, little by little decay and downfall ensue. If we consider mankind at large, there is undoubtedly an advancement quite remarkable; but it is neither uninterrupted nor universal. Epochs of high mental culture are followed by dark centuries, and progress in one respect is attended by retrogression in another. Greek civilization had excellences which ours has not; even the much-defamed Middle Ages erected buildings of such architectural beauty as we cannot surpass, not to speak of their poetry and their philosophical and theological speculation. Our age has penetrated much further into the secrets of nature,

and has rendered its forces subservient to our purposes. But it is very doubtful whether we are deeper in thought than the learned men of by-gone times. And no less is it doubtful whether the mass of the people, now toiling in factories, employed as working machines, dependent on their employers, are more highly developed in mind and body, longer-lived, more contented, better provided with the necessaries of life, than those living in former centuries when steam and electricity were not yet pressed into the service of industry and human intercourse.

The new mechanisms, with their wonderful powers, increase production at the same time that they lessen labor, and, for this reason, put a great multitude out of employment or force them to toil for low wages. They render the work to be done by human hands in some respects easier, but extremely uniform, and are, therefore, detrimental to skill and mental exertion. Reducing the working-men to servitude, they tax their strength and injure their health more seriously than did the ancient manual system. They create a division among men, raising some to enormous wealth while degrading others to extreme poverty, and so engender mutual enmity among the members of society. Are not the labor troubles that now daily occur in all civilized countries ample evidence of the truth of every one of these statements? Are not universal harmony and prosperity menaced by dangers intrinsic to industry itself? As to international peace, have wars been fewer in the nineteenth century, and has less human blood been shed on battle-fields, than in those preceding? Or do the standing armies that consume the marrow of the European countries, and the latest mili-

tary inventions, foreshadow a less bloody settlement of hostilities? Do the relations existing among the different nations manifest a lesser degree of egoism? Who would venture to answer all these questions in the affirmative?

Also in the most advanced stage of civilization there will be moral and physical suffering. There will be disease, exhaustion, and death as consequences of functions necessary for individual and social welfare, or of the influence exercised on man by his environment. Let the mind be ever so much developed, the human will is always moved more or less by passions disposed to excesses detrimental to self and to others. Let the organic adjustment to the social condition be ever so perfect, our own self will always be nearest to us, and our own wants will always be felt first and most intensely. Accordingly, complete disinterestedness will never prevail universally, nor will strifes and jealousy ever disappear. Perfect equality among men is possible neither in bodily strength nor in mental endowments; neither in moral accomplishments, aspirations and enterprises, nor in temporal possessions. Hence, discontent and breaches of harmony are unavoidable.

Evidently, then, evolution within mankind, in accordance with the latest philosophical views, cannot be proved as a historical fact. No, there is in the human race no gradual rise to ever higher perfection due to a tendency intrinsic to all organic nature; no constant growth in life, in bodily and mental strength, bound to terminate sooner or later in universal peace and love, and in the fullness of the purest pleasures. The suppositions on which the hedonistic theories of

man's ultimate end are proximately based, prove unwarranted and devoid of any foundation.

25. Let us now turn to the nature of the ultimate end. Among its attributes there are some which, though recognized as necessary, the hedonists cannot predicate without a startling self-contradiction. Taking happiness for our destiny, they maintain that as such it is made up chiefly of intellectual and æsthetic enjoyments; that it is a future end to be achieved by our actions; and that it is both special and general. But if happiness is supposed to be organic and attainable by organic nature, every one of these properties is as repugnant to it as squareness is to the circle.

Intellectual and æsthetic enjoyments are consequent on the perception of truth, beauty, co-ordination and subordination, likeness and unlikeness, relation of effect to cause, of phenomena to law, of the particular to the universal and ideal. Now, all these objects, being absolutely simple, unextended and immaterial, can be represented in thought only by an act likewise simple, unextended and immaterial. Both their perception, therefore, and the delight attending their perception, must of necessity be supersensuous and immaterial, and such must, also, be the subject in which they are. Either, then, grant human nature to be more than an organism, or do not ascribe to it intellectual perception; either conceive human happiness as non-organic and immaterial, or exclude from it æsthetic pleasures. There is between the material and the intellectual an irreconcilable opposition.

26. It is likewise absolutely impossible that human nature, if merely organic, can desire happiness as an end to be obtained in the future. The will can desire

only what is recognized as good. But organic perception can never apprehend a future good. The future, as such, is not perceptible to the senses. The latter can grasp only what makes an impression on them. But they are impressed by that alone which actually exists and acts on them, being, however, able to reproduce, when occasion demands, impressions once received, to decompose them and re-compose the elements in a new manner. The merely possible, being unable to act, can never impress itself upon sense, nor can the future: for it, too, is a kind of the possible. True, imagination may, from perceived elements, compose an object which will exist, as, for instance, a building or a landscape; but it cannot represent such objects as possible in themselves and as destined to be brought into existence by some efficient cause.

A future good is imperceptible to the senses for still another reason. Not even the internal senses can ever apprehend good as such, that is, the perfection intrinsic to an object, its convenience and usefulness, or the effects which its possession is apt to produce: for knowledge of this kind implies perception and comparison of relations, judgment and reasoning. But if this is the case, one might ask, how do sentient beings apprehend good; for, having desires, they must undoubtedly have also a perception of desirable objects? Being acted on, the animal can but feel the bodily objects impressed as pleasurable or painful, according as the impression of them agrees or disagrees with its own organic constitution, its tendencies and propensities. It so perceives the good as pleasurable, and evil as painful, and consequently loves and pursues only organic pleasure, hates and

shuns only organic pain. This is a truth universally acknowledged; it was a tenet adopted by Christian philosophers,[1] and it is the reason why the hedonists identify goodness and pleasurableness. But a thing impressed agreeably or disagreeably, an impression agreeing or disagreeing with the percipient is always an actual good or evil, an actual pleasure or pain. Hence unquestionably it must be inferred that animals know and pursue only their present and never their future gratification.

Nay, animals are not only unable to pursue a future end or a future good; they are absolutely unable to pursue any end as an end. They cannot know an end as such, because they can perceive neither the intrinsic perfections of a thing that render it desirable for itself, nor the relations of means conducing to a purpose. It may happen that organic acts have reference to future effects which will be pleasurable or useful either to the agent or to the offspring or to the race; yet it does not follow therefrom that the future effect is known and purposed as an end. The organism being adapted to actions which terminate in the preservation of self or the generation and rearing of offspring, the animal, to obtain these effects, needs but seek the gratification of its instincts, in the same manner as for the child to develop its body it is necessary to satisfy the cravings of nature, but not to be acquainted with the usefulness of food and to desire it because of such knowledge. Consequently, happiness cannot be proposed to an organism as an end to be

[1] See St. Thomas, Sum. Theol. p. i. qu. 81, art. 1 and 2; i.-ii., qu. 4, art. 2 ad 2; Quæst. Disp. de Veritate, qu. 25, art. 2; In II. Lib. Ethic. Lect. 5.

desired and pursued, and, if this is impossible, it cannot be a rule and standard of conduct determining what actions are to be done, and what to be omitted.

27. Like reasons militate against the third of the three attributes mentioned above. Happiness as the end of action is considered to be both special and general, egoistic and altruistic. As Mr. Spencer says, pure egoism and pure altruism are alike impossible, both are co-essential.[2] The individual cannot be happy but in a society which is happy, and society is not happy if its units are unhappy. On this point the hedonists are unanimous; they only differ in combining the two kinds of happiness. The egoistic school attempts to reconcile them by subordinating general to personal, the universalistic school, on the contrary, by subordinating personal to general happiness. Mr. Spencer, the champion of egoistic hedonism, proposes his reconciliation in the following terms:

"Clearly, our conclusion must be that general happiness is to be achieved mainly through the adequate pursuit of their own happinesses by individuals; while reciprocally, the happinesses of individuals are to be achieved in part by their pursuit of the general happiness."[3]

The hedonistic views thus expressed contain a host of impossibilities. First, no organic faculty can apprehend happiness as such and in general. The sense perceives the body that acts on it or has acted on it; but to act is possible only for the existing and individual being. In the same impossibility are the senses with regard to corporate happiness. Perceiving the latter would imply the conception of the same enjoy-

[2] Data of Ethics, § 90.

[3] Ibid., § 91.

ment and the same nature common to many, of a whole made of parts, of unity existing in a multitude, all which objects can be perceived only by a simple cognitive principle.

But there is an impossibility not only in the perception, but also in the thing to be perceived. Happiness is essentially personal and not corporate or general. It is the fulfillment of individual desires, the gratification of personal tendencies, and is enjoyed, not by a joint feeling of many, but by the individual feeling of him alone whose longings are satisfied and whose capacities are filled. This holds true in a special manner of organic pleasure, which is the feeling of impressions agreeable to the percipient organism. But is not happiness sometimes enjoyed in common? Certainly; but such common enjoyment implies only that many derive pleasure from the same object, helping one another in doing so, or manifesting to one another the delight they feel. The pleasure itself derived from the common object is each one's own vital act, is essentially self-happiness. Common happiness is not unlike a banquet, at which many partake of the same dishes, whilst in conversation they give expression to their joyous mood of mind. The relish felt in eating and drinking, the benefit accruing to health from copious and precious viands, the gayety excited by social intercourse, is personal and proportionate to each one's individual dispositions.

The conclusions to be drawn are plain. If general happiness cannot be apprehended at all by the sentient being, it certainly cannot be proposed to the same as an end to be pursued. This needs no further explanation. And if happiness is of its nature per-

sonal, it cannot reasonably be maintained that a compromise is possible between general and personal happiness pursued as ends in accordance with hedonistic views. Even if general happiness can be apprehended as an end, as in fact it is apprehended by the immaterial intellect, though not by a sensuous faculty, it cannot be the ultimate end. For it is not in others' happiness, but in self-happiness that every one will find his ultimate rest; it is personal happiness that must be conceived as the ultimate and complete satisfaction of all desires.

But if personal happiness becomes the ultimate end, general happiness is not to be reconciled with it, but rather is to be sacrificed to it. If my own pleasure is the supreme end which by nature I am irresistibly impelled to pursue, it becomes impossible for me to promote the welfare of others for their own sake. In this supposition I can wish and further it only as far as it is subservient to my personal enjoyments. Granted that it is an end of this life to contribute towards other people's happiness, this being a means to attain self-happiness, the motive of benefiting others will always be egoistic. The most generous beneficence will then consist in doing good to others for the reason that doing so is a source of special self-gratification—a way of dealing just as selfish as assistance given to the poor for the purpose of being loved and honored by them. The much vaunted conciliation between the pursuit of general and personal happiness turns out to be the absolute reign of egoism.

28. To sum up the doctrine of the hedonists, they conceive happiness as made up chiefly of intellectual pleasures, and, maintaining it to be organic, must con-

sistently deny that it can be intellectual at all; they propose happiness as the end of human action and the standard of conduct, while, in accordance with their suppositions, human perception is absolutely unfit to apprehend it as such; they glory in having shown the way to a harmonious pursuit of personal and general happiness, and at the same time they render any other than an egoistic pursuit of happiness impossible.

These are not subtleties of logic, but plain, tangible, self-contradictions, which make the theory of the ultimate end a maze of inconsistencies. Nor is this the end of absurdities. The ultimate end being the pivot of morals, the self-contradictions pointed out will recur in every department of hedonistic ethics and will lead in the discussion of every question to incongruous conclusions. The entire system of hedonism thus becomes confused and perplexed.

Yet, fatal as these self-contradictions are, they are unavoidable. The hedonists themselves could never be satisfied with a life devoid of the perception of the true and the beautiful, nor would they ever dare assert that the supreme degree of human perfection excludes intellectual activity. So likewise must happiness, if once assumed as man's ultimate end, be considered as the aim of our actions and the standard of conduct. Nobody has ever entertained a different view. But who would ever venture to propose the well-being of self as the last end, and thus give to egoistic motives absolute supremacy, the truth being admitted by all and denied by none that egoism is the ruin of morality?

Evidently inconsistencies of so serious a nature prove the very foundations of the system to which

they are intrinsic, to be unsafe, and particularly in the present case, prove materialism to be the wrong basis of morality.

29. There are, then, some properties which the hedonists agree in attributing to the last end, and which undoubtedly must be attributed to it, yet which, however necessary they may be, cannot, on hedonistic presuppositions, consistently be predicated. Others there are, no less necessary or essential, which the hedonists seem to have altogether overlooked.

The ultimate end must be such that we can find complete rest in it, all desires of rational nature being satisfied, and such moreover that all without exception can know and attain it. Happiness, as described by Herbert Spencer and J. Stuart Mill, has none of these properties. First, being deficient and but temporary, it gives no rest. Man, prompted by an irresistible tendency inherent in his nature, desires happiness and rests only when he has achieved it full, supreme, and endless. If any sorrow or any loss yet afflicts him, he is anxious to rid himself of this evil, and the more so the greater it is. He is not yet at rest. If he lacks any enjoyable good or any degree of felicity, he strives for its attainment, with longings the more eager and efforts the more energetic the more excellent the thing is which is wanted. He is still restless. Having arrived at the goal of his wishes, if he foresees some danger or even the mere possibility of being deprived of anything that enriches, gladdens, and ennobles him, he is seized with fear and filled with cares to ensure the permanence of his prosperity. Accordingly, the happiness we long for is the perfect and everlasting possession of the

highest good with the exclusion of all evil. Any other state short of this is not deemed to be happiness, or, at least, not such happiness as gives us ultimate rest.

It is unnecessary to say that the happiness held out by hedonistic philosophers lacks completeness, sureness, and endlessness. Even the normal state of mankind as described by them is not free from evil, pain being reduced to a minimum, but not altogether removed. Nor are the enjoyments perfect. Every pleasure is limited in time and degree, and frequently interrupted, no matter whether it be grossly sensuous or highly intellectual; every good possessed is finite and deficient, whether it consists in wealth, or in the esteem and friendship of others. Much less can we regard as perfect happiness the greatest surplus of pleasure possible in the present life, when the struggle for existence is yet going on, when poverty and hard labor yet oppress the greatest portion of mankind, when disease destroys individual existence, and corruption and dishonesty undermine society, when science, thought to be the highest accomplishment of man, must yet strive for more light.

And what as to the certainty and eternity necessary for happiness? Paradise itself, the normal state of mankind, will not last forever. As a particular stage of the cosmic evolution ever going on, it will pass away. In his "First Principles"[4] Herbert Spencer tells us that, at a period beyond the stretch of imagination, the earth will be reduced to a gaseous state after colliding, in consequence of the resistance of

[4] § 182.

the ether, with the sun; nay, that a time will come when the whole solar system, when all heavenly bodies, will be dissolved and will return to a nebulous form. And even were the normal state never to take an end, every individual would be mortal, and so no one's happiness would exceed in duration the limited space of a human life. What, therefore, the hedonists propose as our happiness and our ultimate destiny, is in reality neither happiness, since it is not the fulfillment of our innate desires, nor our ultimate end, because it can give no rest to the tendencies of human nature.

30. Universal knowableness and attainableness are two other essential attributes of the ultimate end. What could be more absurd than that rational beings should, during all their lifetime, at the cost of numberless sacrifices, strive for an end to attain or even to know which is an impossibility? Should we not consider him a madman who would sell his estate to undertake a journey to the moon? Now it is true that agnostics and positivists boast of having proposed an ultimate end, universally knowable and attainable, and lay the opposite fault at the door of Christian philosophers. Let us carefully examine into the case to find out the guilty party.

The fullness of pleasure can, according to hedonistic theories, be enjoyed only when the climax of evolution shall have been reached in the normal state. But evolution within the human race, as explained by Darwin and Herbert Spencer, has not yet been proved as a fact; history and observation point in the opposite direction. Consequently the new paradise discovered by the new theories, resting on no

ground, is no more real than the Olympus of the Grecian deities. And even were it otherwise, were the normal state as certain to come as spring after winter, it would have been unattainable to all preceding ages, and would be so to ages yet to come. Neither A. Comte, nor J. S. Mill, nor Herbert Spencer denies this; they all promise the new heaven on earth only to some future generation. The end, then, proposed by them has thus far been absolutely unattainable to mankind, and will yet remain unattainable for an indefinite time. J. S. Mill would fain except some chosen individuals, who, as he thinks, owing to their education and mental culture, already enjoy as much happiness as can be expected from this life. Suppose it to be so, the verdict remains unchanged; for the ultimate end, according to the utilitarian view, is not the happiness of a few, of one-twentieth of the civilized portion of mankind, but of all sentient existence. The supposition can, however, not be granted. Herbert Spencer quite appropriately remarks[5] that in a society of undeveloped miserable human beings happiness is impossible for any individual whatever, because through sympathy, the source of altruism, the sufferings of one must react on all others, particularly on those more perfect and cultivated. We might add that in such a social environment the few elect must necessarily be exposed to many attacks.

Whatever possibilities we take into account, whatever efforts we make, there is no hope left for us ever to reach that rest and felicity for which we toil and suffer, and for which we sacrifice our present inter-

[5] Data of Ethics, §§ 93, 96, 106.

ests. We may at most console ourselves with the thought that far-distant posterity will have better success, owing in part to our labors and privations. From ourselves happiness always flies, as the rainbow recedes from the child attempting to reach it.

31. No, we are told, such is not our fate. There is, during this life at least, an approximation to happiness. There is attainable at all times, and under every circumstance, a maximum of enjoyment and a minimum of suffering, a greatest surplus of pleasure over pain. It is this that is proposed to us as the end to be pursued during the process of evolution, and it is an end attainable to all without exception.

The pessimists take the opposite view. Life, in their opinion, yields but a surplus of pains. It should not be overlooked, that at all times pessimism has had most adherents among those who, according to materialistic tenets, sought their happiness exclusively in earthly prosperity. In reality, all hopes beyond the grave being cut off, what is life when deprived of its necessaries, when spent in labor and dishonor, when enfeebled by disease and age, when beset with constant pains and anxieties, when embittered by unsatisfied passions, by grief, disappointment, abandonment, despair? How many are there, both among the higher and the lower classes of society who, when so conditioned, consider life a burden? Will the hedonistic philosophers convince them of the contrary? It is scarcely credible that they will. Even to those living in better circumstances, so small an amount of earthly pleasures is offered that it is altogether insufficient to still their thirst for happiness.

32. But let there be a surplus of pleasure, and let it,

in addition, be quite considerable. Does it therefore follow that it is also universally attainable? This is decidedly to be denied, for the reason that it is necessarily unknowable. The proofs are furnished by the hedonistic writers themselves. To find out the surplus, J. Bentham and other utilitarians after him had proposed to balance pleasure with pain, and one pleasure with another. The proposition meets with the disapproval of H. Spencer.[6] His objections are well founded. Comparison supposes commensurable quantities, that is, quantities of the same kind. But pleasures are unlike in quality, and so are pains. Moreover, of the pains and pleasures to be compared, some are present and actually felt, others are future and represented but by a faint idea; some cannot fail to strike our senses, others can scarcely be perceived by elaborate reasoning; some are small in amount, but certain; others, though greater, are uncertain; some are necessary to sustain life, others are accessory. There is not one who by any means of computation could with any degree of certainty foresee what, in his particular circumstances, will yield the greatest possible amount of pleasure. Science itself can give us no unfailing guidance. The influence of time and place, of age, of talents, of temperament, character, and education is too various to be brought under definite rules.

But if the greatest happiness that can be attained by individuals under given circumstances is incalculable, that which can be attained by society is still more so. This is quite convincingly set forth by Herbert Spencer in his critical remarks on Mr. Sidg-

[6] Data of Ethics, §§ 56, 57.

wick, who had urged the incommensurability of pleasures and pains against egoistic hedonism.

"To Mr. Sidgwick's argument," says he, "there is the further objection, no less serious, that to whatever degree it tells against egoistic hedonism, it tells in a greater degree against universalistic hedonism, or utilitarianism. He admits that it tells as much: saying whatever weight is to be attached to the objections brought against this assumption (*the commensurability of pleasures and pains*) must of course tell against the present method. Not only does it tell, but it tells in a double way. I do not mean merely that, as he points out, the assumption becomes greatly complicated if we take all sentient beings into account, and if we include posterity along with existing individuals. I mean that, taking as the end to be achieved the greatest happiness of the existing individuals forming a single community, the set of difficulties standing in the way of egoistic hedonism, is compounded with another set of difficulties no less great, when we pass from it to universalistic hedonism. For if the dictates of universalistic hedonism are to be fulfilled, it must be under the guidance of individual judgments, or of corporate judgments, or of both. Now, any one of such judgments issuing from a single mind, or from any aggregate of minds, necessarily embodies conclusions respecting the happiness of other persons: few of them known, and the great mass never seen. All these persons have natures differing in countless ways and degrees from the natures of those who form the judgments; and the happinesses of which they are severally capable differ from one another, and differ from the happinesses of those who form the judgments. Consequently, if against the method of egoistic hedonism there is the objection that a man's own pleasures and pains, unlike in their kind, intensities, and times of occurrence, are incommensurable; then against the method of universalistic hedonism it may be urged that to the incommensurability of each judge's own pleasures and pains (which he must use as standards), has now to be added the much more decided incommensurability of pleasures and pains which he conceives to be experienced by innumerable other persons, all differently constituted from himself and from one another."[7]

[7] Data of Ethics, § 57.

Herbert Spencer's reasoning renders it evident that the greatest happiness attainable, whether to man or to society, is an indeterminate quantity varying with every individual, with every new circumstance, with every new degree of evolution.

33. But having heard his exceptions to utilitarianism, let us now see what method he has himself proposed to determine the greatest possible surplus of pleasure. From the preceding chapter we know that he considers the use of the means, or, as he elsewhere says, the principles and conditions of happiness, as the immediate end to be pursued. Laying down this tenet, he had the solution of the present problem in view. The means of happiness when sought for themselves, he imagined, would admit of more exact measurement than happiness itself.

Unfortunately his method is beset with no lesser difficulties than J. Bentham's. Not the means of happiness themselves, but their use, or rather the pleasure of pursuit attending it, has been proposed by him as our immediate end, there being no other desirable object than the pleasurable. Now, undoubtedly, to determine the greatest surplus of this kind of pleasure, comparison, too, is necessary. In fact, Herbert Spencer himself repeatedly decides in this way what conduct is right or wrong. Is comparison or valuation in this matter plain and simple? It is his own teaching that we can give no account of those simple pleasures which the senses yield, because they are indecomposable; that complex pleasures formed by composing and recomposing the ideas of simple pleasures are not easy to resolve; and that in proportion as they are heterogeneous in composition, the difficulty

of framing intelligible conceptions increases. He adds in particular that such difficulties especially perplex the conception of the pleasures which attend our sports —that is, the pleasure of pursuit.[8] And yet, without an intelligible conception, a proper valuation of pleasures is impossible.

Then the pleasures of pursuit are by no means commensurable with the pains we have to suffer. Whilst the latter consists not only in dishonor, but also in death and disease and poverty and grief and sorrow, produced by numberless causes, the chief elements of the former are a "renewed consciousness of personal efficiency," and "a representation of the applause which recognition of this efficiency by others has before brought and will again bring." Is there not just as great a difference in kind between these pains and pleasures as between those spoken of by J. Bentham, that is, the pains or pleasures consequent on the missing or achieving of ends?

Lastly, to conceive how pleasures of pursuit can be compared with one another, we must recall to mind that means, by their use, afford the more pleasure the remoter they are from the primary end. For, as he says, "the pleasure attending each set of acts, while making possible the pleasures attending each set of acts which follows, is joined with the representation of this subsequent set of acts and its pleasures and of others which succeed in order." To form, therefore, a due estimation, it will be necessary to foresee all the acts which the use of certain means requires and the order in which the acts follow one another, until the primary end is reached; to represent in thought all

[8] Data of Ethics, § 58.

the pleasures which attend each act and every set of acts, to find the remotest means and forecast how, in the combination of means and succession of acts and pleasures, it becomes the most complex of all. What an amount of reflection and what acuteness of mind does not this foresight imply? It must further be taken into consideration that not a few pleasures of pursuit must thus be measured and compared, but a multitude of them; not only those which are actual, but also those which are possible; those which will or may be obtained during a considerable space of human life which is itself uncertain and doubtful. We may concede to Mr. Spencer all the ability required for the estimation of pleasures accompanying his own existence. But certain it is, neither he can thus estimate the pleasures of pursuit attainable to others, since they are as relative as enjoyments of any other kind; nor can, in general, others estimate them by themselves, gifted as they may be with talents only of a lower order, and lacking the necessary leisure to calculate with accuracy the pleasures intrinsic to their toils and labors for the sustenance of life.

Considering all the kinds of pains and pleasures, and the unavailableness of the methods proposed to estimate them, we must conclude that the greatest happiness possible during this life is under all conditions uncertain, and will always remain a quantity as unknowable to us as the atmospheric changes of the next century. But if such, can it ever be proposed to man as the end he may attain or must pursue?

From the conclusion thus arrived at, we must draw another inference. What is neither real, nor attainable, nor knowable can never be an object or an end

for man. To say the contrary would be to mock at human nature. Accordingly, neither the happiness to be attained in the normal state of mankind, nor the greatest surplus of pleasure over pain during life, can be called an end. Hedonism, then, is in reality the very negation of an ultimate end proposed to man.

34. By another consideration, we come to the same result. If the fullness of pleasure is the ultimate end of man, he is an end unto himself; for pleasure is intrinsic to man. In fact, this is a common saying of modern philosophers, and a saying quite consistent with materialistic or evolutionary views. To what higher being should man have reference, if he is supreme himself, the climax of evolution from self-existent matter?

Nay, more, if pleasure is the ultimate end, action, also, is ultimately an end unto itself; for pleasure is but its property and its complement. But what is action conceived as its own end? Evidently one referred to no object or to no end. Could there be a more patent self-contradiction? Every act of ours essentially refers to an object, and so do, in particular, perception and volition, the two acts attended with pleasure—the one representing the true, the other inclining towards the good. What, therefore, is an action which is made to be ultimately its own end? Clearly, the complete denial of any ultimate end whatever proposed to human action, and thus the perverting of action itself into a monstrous absurdity. The final result, then, of our discussion is, that hedonism proposes to man no object at all to which he must look up, and which, pursued as the ultimate end, elevates his tendencies, rules his actions, and directs them as

a higher standard. No, it leaves man to himself—to crawl on this earth during the short period of his mortal life. All it does is to give him a vague and indefinite rule derived from animal nature—the rule to enjoy himself in the best way possible.

What does a moral system of this kind present to the mind? Does it lay before us a well-designed groundwork, broad and solid, on which a grand structure may be reared? A basis, on which morals may safely rest in the tempestuous course of ages? The hedonistic theory of man's ultimate end has only brought destruction. Instead of building up, it has demolished the very foundation of morality, and left a confused mass of ruins.

CHAPTER V.

GOD THE ULTIMATE END.

35. Christian philosophers infer man's ultimate end from the tendencies inherent in human nature.
36. To arrive at a legitimate conclusion, they first reduce the several faculties to unity by subordinating the lower to the higher.
37. The highest faculties of man are the intellect and the will, and of these two again the will, as a tendency aiming at an end, stands higher. Hence from the nature of the will the end of man must be inferred.
38. The tendency of the will is directed towards perfect rational activity. This, therefore, is in some respect the end of man.
39. Perfect rational activity is the ultimate perfection of man, and this again constitutes his happiness.
40. Perfect rational activity constituting happiness does not consist in delight, but in the contemplation of truth and the love of the good.
41. Still, happiness is only the ultimate subjective end. The absolutely ultimate end is identical with the highest truth and the highest good, to which perfect contemplation and love refer as to their highest object.
42. God is the highest object of the intellect and the will.
43. And He is such, not as the source of delight, but as the supreme and absolute perfection.
44. And not as merely conceivable, but as attainable and actually existing.
45. Happiness can be enjoyed only in an immortal life to come, in which the soul is independent of the body. Hence the immediate end and purpose of this life is, not the possession, but the pursuit, of the ultimate end.

35. CHRISTIAN ethics embodies the thought of more than two thousand years. Its first outlines were conceived by Plato and Aristotle; its completion was the work of the ancient teachers of Christianity, of the scholastic doctors of the Middle Ages, and of prominent philosophers up to this day. From century to century it was perfected; its definitions and fundamental principles were again and again analyzed, each of its tenets was repeatedly made the object of careful thought, all its parts were elaborated by long-continued reflection and fitted into one well-concerted system. Is this time-honored building, notwithstanding the genius of its designers, now giving way? Have its foundations crumbled, and must others be substituted? Has, in particular, the cornerstone of Christian morals, the last end of man, been shown by science or modern speculation to be unsolid? These questions we must now answer; for otherwise we cannot know the relative value of the new philosophy, nor can we form an idea of the broad revolution which it is to bring about in society. Our answer shall consist in a brief exposition of the scholastic doctrine. This given, the reader will be sufficiently informed to pronounce judgment.

First, we must call attention to the method by which the scholastic philosophers proceeded to establish man's ultimate destiny. Of course, they did not anticipate the end in which evolution results; for Darwinism was unknown to former ages. They observed our own innate faculties as they manifest themselves to our consciousness by their actions. What nature by its inborn propensity desires, what it is intrinsically adapted to pursue, what, if once

reached, it rests in without any disquietude, they thought must be the last end of every human being. As the mark aimed at by a skillful archer is calculable from the motion and direction of the dart, so can the goal of human nature be known from its bent and tendency.

36. But there are many faculties in man, acting and moving, as it would seem, in diverse directions. Should we, then, in accordance with this method, not infer from them also a diversity of ends proposed to us? As the different organs constitute but one organism, and soul and body but one human being, so the tendencies of our different faculties result in one final motion. As man is one being, so he must be one in his activity and, consequently, pursue one principal end. His is a nature of more perfect unity than is observed in any mechanism, and yet in a mechanism many component forces, forming one resultant, are directed towards one effect. The question, therefore, arises, how in man the different faculties are reducible to unity, and in what tendency they will result when harmoniously and congenially united? The problem was long ago solved by the scholastic philosophers. The faculties inferior by their nature must be subordinate to those superior, and these again to that which is supreme. In this way art produces unity in its works, and so has the universe been reduced to harmony, all its parts being adjusted to the whole they constitute, the heavenly bodies moving around common centres, the inanimate kingdom being made subservient to the animate, the lower species to the higher, and brutes to man. In the human organism itself, bones and sinews, muscles and glands are

obedient to the nerves, which again, by being united in centres, are reduced to a system, and the organs of motion and nutrition subserve those of sensation. A most wonderful unity is thus obtained. And reason shows that in this way alone harmonious order can come into existence. Things and powers that are unequal in being cannot be equal in value and in activity, nor can they be joined by co-ordination. A union by subordination is required by their very nature.

37. Now, the highest faculties in man are intellect and will; both spiritual, while all others are organic and material; the one fitted to the perception of all being, the finite and the infinite, the material and the immaterial; the other inclined to all good intellectually known, hence to good as such, to good universal and unlimited; the one, therefore, supreme as enlightening us and manifesting to us all truth, the other as desiring and pursuing all the good and perfection suitable to human nature as a whole. However, though each of the two faculties is supreme in its sphere, and though the act of volition is dependent on intellection as proposing the desirable object, still, as a tendency aiming at an end, the will is superior to the intellect. The object of a tendency is always some good to be attained. The intellect pursues only its own particular good, the knowledge of truth, by drawing the object to itself and expressing its likeness; the will pursues the good of the entire living subject by inclining toward the perfection contained in the object and seeking union with it. The tendency of the will to good is, therefore, more universal and more elevating; it is directed to all good, to that

of the whole and not that of the part alone, and it aims at conjunction with the highest object.[1]

The intellect and will, then, being supreme, all other faculties must be subordinate to them; those that are cognitive to the intellect, and those that are appetitive to the will. But also between the two that are supreme there exists a certain order. The intellect, though it guides volition, presenting both the good to be pursued and the order of pursuance, is subject to the will as to the highest tendency. Thus perfect oneness is established in human activity. Intellect and will, in their union, guide and govern the other powers in man; the will especially encompasses all other tendencies, determining and directing them as their master. And well are these two faculties fitted to be the leaders of the others; for they are not only higher in being, because spiritual, and more universal, but also competent to conceive and will the highest end, to find out the means conducive to it, and to resolve on the employment of those that are the fittest. From the will, therefore, we must infer the end to which human nature is adjusted. Hence, it may be understood why Christian ethics, as was said above, considers the act of the will as the moral act; it is by the will that the end peculiar to man is desired and pursued.[2]

38. Knowing the final tendency of human nature to be represented by the tendency of the will, we must subject the latter to a more exact analysis. Every faculty is designed by its intrinsic constitution for

[1] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., p. i., qu. 82, art. 3.

[2] On the subordination of the faculties and their final tendency, see "Institutiones Juris Naturalis," by Th. Meyer, S.J., vol. i., nn. 8–21.

action, and, therefore, directly tends to action. Accordingly the will inclines to activity, and so also does its guide, the intellect. The will, however, has for its end not its own act merely. It is essentially dependent on, and proportioned to, the intellect, and therefore it must desire the latter's perfection too. Moreover, the will intends the good of the entire subject. The intellect, though not supreme as a tendency, excels in perfection all other powers, being fit to apprehend being, the most universal of all objects. Its act, therefore, is a good of human nature, nay, a most prominent good, which the will must above all desire. Nor do the faculties acquiesce in imperfect activity; they tend to the most perfect operation, and only when this is reached can they attain rest. So it is with the will also. It can rest only when its own activity and that of the intellect are altogether perfect and consummate; for intellection being imperfect, volition, too, remains imperfect; and intellection not yet being consummate, the will, because it has not procured the principal good to man, has not fully discharged its function. Thus we come to the conclusion that the tendency of the human will is directed towards rational activity, and that the perfection of the latter must needs be in some respect its ultimate end.[3]

39. Making a further step in analysis, we find perfect rational activity to be the ultimate human perfection. Man has natural perfections which constitute him a principle of action substantially complete. But these perfections, in many regards, require some complement. He becomes fully equipped for

[3] St. Thomas, Sum. contra Gent., lib. iii., cap. 25.

action, a perfect, and in every respect complete principle, by the additional acquisition of several qualities, which are not innate in him, and yet are needful for him, inasmuch as without them his activity is irregular, inconstant, inefficient, and not normally developed. And, even so, man is not yet ultimately perfect. His faculties proceed to action, and action further perfects him, as the blossoms or the fruits adorn the tree. This holds true of vital actions in a special manner. They produce their immediate effects in the subject itself from which they proceed, and so enrich it and increase it in being. Very appropriate is, therefore, Aristotle's remark, that as the perfection of an artist lies in his work, so the perfection of man consists in the activity peculiar to him.[4] But beyond action there is no other good or perfection in man; all further goods are without him, and come only into relationship with him. Activity, therefore, is the last intrinsic perfection of every living being; rational activity, which is supreme in kind, the last perfection intrinsic to man, and perfect rational activity, his highest and ultimate perfection.

Advancing another step, we see that man's highest ultimate perfection is his happiness.[5] This definition is neither unfrequent nor is it out of harmony with others usually adopted. For if happiness is defined by Boëthius as "a state made perfect by the aggregate sum of all things good," or by others as the perfect and permanent possession of all good with the exclusion of all evil, good in its fullness must be understood to be either intrinsic or extrinsic

[4] Nicomachean Ethics, book i., chap. viii., 6.
[5] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol. i.-ii., qu. 3, art. 3.

to the subject conceived as happy. If it is intrinsic, it implies consummate activity; if it is extrinsic, it must be embraced in close union by the activity which is supreme in kind and degree, that is, by the most perfect rational activity proved to be man's ultimate perfection.

To sum up the conclusions arrived at, the ultimate end of man is to be placed in perfect rational activity, in ultimate perfection, and in happiness, not as in three different things, but as in one and the self-same; the three conceptions being resolvable into one another, and each one of them denoting a goal of human tendency, a limit beyond which no desire remains to be satisfied. We meet here with a peculiarity of the ancient teaching. Nearly all philosophers consider happiness as our destiny; many also agree that happiness is man's ultimate perfection and implies his vital actions; but that happiness, as our ultimate end, consists in perfect rational activity is the special view of Christian moralists. And we must add, that it is a view very forcibly insisted on by them as exhibiting the very essence of happiness.[6] On this account they go on to analyze the activity that renders us at once happy and ultimately perfect.

40. This activity must be supreme in kind, degree, and order, most pleasant and permanent; it must regard the highest object and effect the closest union with it. What function, or what collection of func-

[6] Aristotle, Ethics, book i., chapter vii., viii., 1–6; St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.,–ii., qu. 3, art. 2. There, also, the objection is solved, that in the ancient definition happiness is termed a state. The Angelic Doctor answers, that Boëthius did not give a full and exact definition as Aristotle did. Others remark that permanent, uninterrupted activity may well be called a state.

tions, is vested with these attributes? Intellect and will being the highest faculties of the rational soul, happiness, as perfect rational activity, implies the knowledge of truth, the love of good and the delight attending either of these two acts. Delight is necessary to happiness. Every perfect action is followed by delight: for it lies in the nature of a faculty that, having discharged the function for which it was made, perfectly and normally, it comes to rest and is satisfied. But for the very reason that delight is not the action itself, but merely its result or concomitant, it cannot be an essential constituent of happiness: it is but one of its necessary attributes that adheres to it, as beauty does to youth.[7]

Perfect intellection and volition are undoubtedly both required for happiness, both of them achieving the possession of the highest object, the one as representation, the other as love. The act of the intellect, however, is considered, if not as the only, at least as the principal constituent of happiness. Again, intellectual acts are many in kind; some are elicited by the practical understanding, which has for its object the guidance of human operations, others by the speculative understanding, which is concerned with truth in itself and for its own sake. Which of the two kinds of acts makes up happiness? Not the act of the practical understanding; for this is not supreme in order, having reference to action as a further end. Consequently the act of speculative understanding. The contemplation of truth for its own sake, indeed, has all the requirements stated above. It is supreme in every respect, the highest act of the highest power, leading

[7] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.-ii., qu. 2, art. 6; qu. 4, art. 1, 2,

to no further end ; it is most delightful, because delight is the greater and the purer, the sublimer the action is from which it springs ; it can be continued by a spirit without interruption and fills the mind with the highest truth." Of a life of continued contemplation, even as carried on in our earthly existence, Aristotle says :

"Such a life is more than human ; for man will so live, not inasmuch as he is man, but inasmuch as there is a divine element in his composition. So far as this element excels the compound into which it enters, so far does the act of the said element excel any other act in any other line of virtue. If, then, the understanding is divine in comparison with man, the life of the understanding is divine in comparison with human life. We must not take the advice of those who tell us that, being man, one should cherish the thoughts of a man, or, being mortal, the thoughts of a mortal, but, so far as in us lies, we must play the immortal and do all in our power to live by the best element in our nature : for, though the element be slight in quantity, in power and value it far outweighs all the rest of our being. Nay, every man seems to be this element, because it is the ruling power and the better part in him. It would, therefore, certainly be absurd not to pursue one's own life, but that of another, and what was said before will apply now ; for that which is peculiar to every creature by nature is best and sweetest for each ; such, then, is for man the life of the understanding, since the understanding pre-eminently is man. This life, therefore, is most happy." [9]

41. Happiness, being, as thus far shown, vital activity, is necessarily intrinsic to man, as his own immanent perfection, and is, on this account, termed formal or subjective. But for this very reason, that it is an activity, it involves relations to some external object. Any act of our intellect is essentially a representation of a truth distinct from it, and any act of our will

[8] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 3, art. 5; Aristotle, Ethics, book x., chap. vii., 1–6.

[9] Ethics, book x., chap. vii., 9–11.

is an inclination towards some good not identical with it. Consequently the truth to be represented and the good to be obtained or possessed are objects to which happiness refers as to further ends, in the same way as the image has reference to a model, and motion to a goal. Truth, therefore, and good are objective ends to which formal happiness corresponds as a subjective end. For did we not define the latter as the act by which we embrace the object, and the former as the object embraced? Accordingly, if formal happiness is called the ultimate end, it can only be meant to be the last among all subjective ends, but not the last taken absolutely. The absolutely ultimate end is evidently in the objective order, though not disconnected, but corresponding with the subjective order; it is the highest truth and the highest good, beyond which nothing remains to be known and desired, and which, when it is known and possessed, gives rest to the rational faculties; it is the object of the rational activity which constitutes formal happiness. On this account it is sometimes called objective happiness.

What is this ultimate objective end? It is of the highest importance to know it unerringly; for it is the end to which all our actions must be directed, the standard of our conduct. Concerning this end, the opinions and convictions of men are chiefly at variance. For all wish to be happy, but not all derive their happiness from the same object. What, then, is this end?

42. Can it be anything finite or created? Every finite being is for the will but a limited good, and presents to the intellect but a limited truth. Let it

be ever so perfect and sublime, there is beyond it something conceivable that is still sublimer, and, therefore, still worthier of knowledge and love, and yields, if reached, still greater perfection. Besides, no produced being—and whatever is finite comes into existence by production—can be fully and satisfactorily known, if its cause remains unknown. Were all the mysteries of nature unraveled, were all its provinces explored, and all its laws discovered, were the interdependence of all its parts, and the constitution of every body and organism, from the lowest up to the best-evolved, laid open; the human mind could not rest satisfied. The question will still present itself: Whence is this wonderful universe? Where did its successions originate? What gave existence to the whole series of produced and ever-changing bodies? How did the substance underlying all mundane changes come into being? Whence is the mind, the source of all our thoughts? Whence the dependence and connection of the numberless parts of the universe, whence their order, their harmony and unity, whence the most wondrous adjustment of organs to functions, and means to ends? Questions like these will always demand an answer, and the mind will never come to rest until it has risen to the Self-existent Being above the finite world, to the personal Deity, infinitely wise and perfect, to the source of all being, of all beauty and order, to the Providence that superintends all and directs each being to its proper end. In this ultimate and universal cause the mind finds higher truth and the will more perfect goodness than here below; nay, in the infinity of the same, mind and will meet with all truth and all goodness. The object,

therefore, of blissful contemplation and love is the Deity.[10]

The reason why the human mind takes such a lofty flight lies in the unlimited scope of its faculties. The understanding is fit to apprehend all being, and likewise the will is fit to desire and love all good. Nay, the object of the intellect is the very essence of all being, and, therefore, the will also inclines to the good as such, to the very nature of good.[11] The consequence is that understanding and will have a boundless compass, and can be filled with nothing short of the infinite: that the one penetrates to the ultimate cause of all that is, to the self-existent, and the other tends to the last source of good, to goodness itself. Hence, we also understand why He who is highest in being—God—is also the highest object attainable to the human faculties, and, therefore, the object of happiness; for the highest act must necessarily refer to the highest object.

43. The tenets set forth are of themselves the refutation of an objection frequently made by utilitarians. Christian ethics, they say, is itself a form of hedonism, because the ultimate end recognized by it is happiness; and as this is not meant to be general, but personal, a form even of egoistic hedonism. The preceding explanations have evidenced that the absolutely ultimate end does not coincide with subjective happiness, as hedonism teaches, but with the object of the highest and blissful acts of contemplation and love. This object, as was explained, is God, the

[10] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i–ii., qu. 3, art. 7, 8; Sum. c. Gent., lib. iii., cap. 25, 26.

[11] Ibid., qu. 4, art. 2, ad 2.

Self-existing Being, not merely as beatifying us, but as the absolute truth and goodness, infinitely perfect in itself. Reason is not like sense. The latter perceives material things only as acting on it, and thus is cognizant only of their relative goodness, their pleasurableness for the percipient. But the intellect grasps its objects free from materiality, as they are true, good and perfect in themselves. And as the intellect acts, so also does the will; as the former knows good, so the latter pursues it, not merely as relative, but as absolute.

It may be said that the will seeks the good of the subject in which it is, and that, therefore, it tends to good as relative. No doubt it pursues the good of man, that is, the perfection suitable to human nature as a whole. But since the highest perfection intrinsic to any intelligent being consists in the most perfect rational activity; and since the object of the latter is the infinite considered absolutely; God, as contemplated in Himself and loved for His own sake, is the highest extrinsic good of man.

True it is, God may be loved as beatifying us and filling our heart with delight. He is, in fact, the source of the purest and sublimest enjoyment. Every suitable object, when reached, is pleasurable; for pleasure is the rest of the faculty in its proper object attained by action. Our mind, therefore, delights in the beauties of nature and the works of art, our will in love and friendship, or in honors and treasures, longed for and at last obtained. How much more delightful must God's infinite beauty, perfection, and bounty be when perfectly contemplated, ardently loved, and inseparably embraced? Still, as pleasure

is not happiness, but only its necessary concomitant, so is God, considered as the source of delight, not the ultimate end; the delight which springs from Him is only consequent on our having embraced Him as our end by the most perfect activity. In the right order delight can never be an ultimate end. Our faculties and acts are directed to the object to which they are adapted, and not to the satisfaction attending the attainment of the object, just as the dart, in motion, tends directly to the goal, and only indirectly to rest in the goal when reached. Rational faculties, in particular, are made to pursue the intrinsic truth and goodness of their objects. Even when the animal appetite pursues its object as pleasurable, pleasure is by nature intended as a complement of efficient operation, and, at the same time, as an inducement for the agent to repeated actions, necessary for the preservation of self, or of the species, and hence as a means to further purposes.[12] Thus, every consideration leads us to the conclusion that nothing but God Himself, His absolute perfection, not His delightfulness, is our ultimate end.

44. Yet, be it so. Have the Christian moralists also proved the attainableness of the exalted end they propose to man? May not happiness, too, as described by them, be only an ideal state, always aspired to, always approached, but, like the evolutionary paradise, never reached? Is not, perhaps, the infinite itself, in which it is to be found, a mere object of thought without reality and existence? The answer is not difficult. Happiness taken subjectively we have proved to consist in the highest perfection, in the

[12] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 4, art. 2, ad 2.

most perfect rational activity, in consummate knowledge of the supreme truth and love of supreme goodness. As the highest perfection it is the object of irresistible desires; for what do we long for more eagerly than the possession of all good? As the most perfect contemplation and love, it not only lies within our capacities, but is the goal to which our faculties are urged on by an inherent impulse. Now, let us suppose it to be impossible for man ever to attain to such happiness. What would thence follow? His natural powers would be unable to discharge their chief function, though fully adapted to it; his innate tendencies, however strong, would be without a real object; his longings, though ruled by reason, would always be ultimately directed to an unattainable end. Do we notice anything of that kind in irrational creation? Are there in plants or in animals organs without corresponding functions, natural tendencies which must always fail, necessary desires which cannot be satisfied, and so are a source of continual torment, activities naturally directed to objects which do not and cannot exist? No, nature does nothing in vain, nor is there anything useless in it. This saying of Aristotle is amply verified by modern science and daily illustrated by experience. Shall not the same axiom hold true with regard to man, the crown of creation? Shall nature, which everywhere else is order, regularity and beauty, in him be disorder and confusion? Shall it, when it has become rational and has attained to its highest perfection, be a labyrinth of incongruities? Shall reason itself turn out an absurdity and monstrous self-contradiction? Were it so, the light of reliable and certain

knowledge could no more illumine us ; we should be engulfed in the darkest night of universal skepticism.

If subjective happiness is attainable to all endowed with reason, then objective happiness, the infinite, must be real. Our mind cannot rest but in God, as the existing cause of all that is and as the real source of all the beauty and perfections found in the universe, in the same manner as the explorer does not content himself with surveying a single portion of a river he has discovered, but descends to its mouth and ascends to its fountain-head. Our contemplation does not rest anywhere else than in the fullness of being, which is not mere possibility but unlimited existence. Nor can our wishes be restricted to good merely conceived and not existing ; for, as the intellect eagerly thirsts for real truth, so does the will long for real and existing goodness.

The happiness, then, of which we are capable, owing to our intrinsic constitution ; the happiness which we desire not only in our childhood or in an inferior state of civilization, but most strongly when our mental life is fully developed ; the happiness the longing for which is the most powerful spring of action and incitement to progress, bears within itself evidence both of its attainableness and of the reality of its object. Were there no other convincing reason for the existence of God, our innate tendency and irresistible desire to be happy would be a certain and irrefragable proof of it.

45. However, though happiness is most certainly attainable, it cannot be enjoyed during this earthly life. This truth does not need demonstration. Happiness, as was said above, must be everlasting ; life on

earth is short and mortal. Happiness is the perfect contemplation of the supreme truth, and the perfect love of the supreme good; during this life the cognition, as well as the love of any supersensible object, is imperfect and deficient. Happiness must be steady, sure, undisturbed, never mixed with any evil; this life is incompatible with constant, deep and attentive thought, is liable to sufferings, is bound down to many bodily needs, is unsteady and uncertain, always ebbing and flowing. We must, therefore, conclude that after the death of the body the surviving soul, the immaterial subject of our mental faculties, will, if duly prepared, enjoy the bliss of divine contemplation and divine love in a life entirely spiritual and immaterial.

What, then, is the purpose of this earthly life? What immediate object must it pursue and what relation has it to the last end? Since the tendency to happiness is intrinsic to us and irresistible, mortal life is but a preparation for the immortal life to come, and earthly existence but a movement towards the ultimate goal beyond. To this end all our actions must be directed, though from afar, as the steps of a traveler are all in the direction of the distant city he is to reach. And so they will be directed, if through them the Deity is ever better known and ever more desired and loved, and if we are brought into ever greater harmony with supreme truth and goodness. In as far as such harmony is now attained, so far will our earthly life be anticipated happiness. In a word, the immediate end of this life consists in the pursuit of the last end.[13]

[13] See Th. Meyer, S.J., Institutiones Juris Nat., vol. i., p. 56.

Hence we understand the destiny also of the body. It is evidently not made to partake of the final happiness. The acts in which the latter consists are performed by the soul alone. The body is united to the soul in order to serve as an instrument whilst she is preparing herself for her ultimate end; the time of preparation having elapsed at the moment of death, it has fulfilled its task. To enjoy the eternal reward deserved by her free acts, the soul does not need the body. It could not minister to her, but rather would be an obstacle to her blissful contemplation. To be fit for ministration harmonious with her state, it must be endowed with qualities undue to matter. Yet these are gifts not within the province of nature; they belong to the higher order of grace, in which happiness consists in a life far above the natural capacities of the soul, and where God, not as known from creation, but as seen and contemplated immediately, is man's ultimate end.[14]

Now, is there anything unsafe or inconclusive in this line of reasoning followed by Christian philosophers? No proof to that effect has as yet been adduced. Or are the positions maintained irreconcilable with science or disproved by recent physiological or biological researches? No scientific conclusion, proved by experience within its proper province, is gainsaid by the ethics of old. Or do they contain any statement out of harmony with human nature? Of course, the Christian view is incongruous with the assumption that man is but the highest of mammals. It is based on the spirituality of the human soul and the immateriality of will and intellect. From these, as premises, all

[14] Ibid., p. 53.

conclusions are drawn with the utmost consistency. The Christian moralists are not, like the hedonists, compelled constantly to contradict themselves, attributing to matter what evidently is peculiar to spirit, thus to bring their system into some harmony with the universal convictions of mankind and with the first requisites of the moral order. The end which Christian ethics proposes to man is not indistinct from him; neither is it identical with his actions. It stands high above him; it is the most sublime and the most exalted object that can be conceived—the Deity itself. Yet, though divine and infinite, this end is not shrouded in darkness and indefiniteness; it is revealed by all creation clearly and distinctly, and dawns on us from early youth. Nor is it beyond our reach: the proof of its attainableness lies in the very nature of our reason. So conditioned, it is the highest and the fittest standard of conduct; being universal, it regulates all human actions, social and individual, and directs them all both to personal and general well-being; and, being most sublime, it elevates them to the highest degree of moral worth.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NATURE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

46. Moral goodness and badness are predicated of our actions according as they are tending towards, or deviating from, our ultimate end.

47. Herbert Spencer, placing man's end in happiness consisting in the greatest possible amount of pleasure, terms those actions good which conduce to a surplus of pleasure, and those bad which conduce to a surplus of pain.

48. His definition is objected to, because it places goodness in conduciveness to personal happiness.

49. The utilitarians, regarding the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number as man's ultimate end, define human actions as good or bad according as they make for or against general happiness.

50. However, in J. S. Mill's opinion, actions to be good need not have general happiness for their motive; it suffices that they further private utility without violating the rights of any one.

51. The Christian philosophers predicate morality only of free actions, and they term those good which tend to God and so dispose us for His possession, and those bad which deviate from the direction to Him, and so render us unfit for union with Him.

52. The standard measure by which we judge the morality of our actions is our own reason emitting the light of evident principles;

53. Yet our reason, not as supreme and absolute, but as the created likeness of the Divine Reason.

54. The views of the old and of the new ethics concerning the morality of human actions are diametrically opposed and altogether irreconcilable.

46. HAPPINESS is the supreme desire of rational nature, because it is the object to which we always aspire, as the eye always turns to the light; the common

centre of all our actions, as the sun is the centre of the planets. Next in value and desirableness comes moral goodness. It is considered the highest excellence attainable on earth; and its reverse, moral badness, the lowest degradation conceivable. To attain the former and escape the latter is thought worthy of the greatest sacrifices. Nor is it possible to change this view or to maintain ourselves in indifference concerning this object. Our mind is within us, like a judge seated on a tribunal, constantly deciding what is good and what is evil, ever inciting the will to do the one and to avoid the other; praising it when compliant, and upbraiding it when reluctant. In human society, too, nothing is so highly approved of as righteousness—nothing so much condemned as iniquity.

What it is that raises moral goodness so high in excellence and importance, we shall at once understand on inquiring into its nature. Moral goodness or badness is predicated of our actions because of their relation to our final destination. The action which is directed to our ultimate end, thus conducing to its attainment, is good; the action, on the contrary, which is deviating from this end, and so hinders us from reaching it, is bad. The ultimate end being the supreme good, evidently whatever leads to it shares its goodness, and whatever diverts us from it is evil and deserving of the utmost hatred. Hence it is that moral goodness—that is, the goodness of our actions—comes nearest to happiness.

47. In thus defining moral good as that which conduces to the ultimate end, and moral evil as that which deviates from it, the philosophers of all schools

are in full accord. Yet, as they hold opposite views concerning our ultimate end, they must needs be at variance, as soon as they come to determine what particular actions are included in the general definition of the good.

The hedonists take happiness consisting in the greatest possible surplus of pleasures over pains for man's ultimate destination. They are, therefore, quite consistent, when they term those acts good which are pleasurable or lead to pleasure, and, contrariwise, those bad which are painful or produce pain.

Let us hear Herbert Spencer, the exponent of egoistic hedonism. First, he compares all actions that are called good, and comes by this comparison to the conclusion that, taking into account the immediate and remote effects on all persons, the good is universally the pleasurable, meaning by the pleasurable directly the pleasure-giving action, and indirectly the things which are the causes or objects of pleasure-giving actions.[1]

Elsewhere we meet with the following definition:

"The conception of good conduct always proves, when analyzed, to be the conception of a conduct which produces a surplus of pleasure somewhere; while, conversely, the conduct conceived as bad proves always to be that which inflicts somewhere a surplus of either positive or negative pain."[2]

Good so defined in his theory coincides with the furtherance of life. For, as life is desirable only as far as it is pleasurable, and is furthered only by pleasurable actions; making life the last end is tantamount to making pleasure our final purpose, and futhering life tantamount to the pursuit of pleasure. The following are his own words:

[1] Data of Ethics, § 10. [2] Ibid., § 101.

"This judging as good conduct which conduces to life in each and all, we found to involve the assumption that animate existence is desirable. . . . We saw that pessimists and optimists both start with the postulate that life is a blessing or a curse, according as the average consciousness accompanying it is pleasurable or painful. And since avowed or implied pessimists, and optimists, of one or the other shade, taken together, constitute all men, it results that this postulate is universally accepted. Whence it follows that if we call good the conduct conducive to life, we can do so only with the implication that it is conducive to a surplus of pleasure over pains." [3]

The conception of good thus set forth Herbert Spencer thinks to be implied in every other philosophical or religious theory of morals.[4] Summing up his analysis, he says in this regard:

"The truth that conduct is considered by us as good or bad, according as its aggregate results, to self or others or both, are pleasurable or painful, we found on examination to be involved in all the current judgments on conduct: the proof being, that reversing the applications of the words creates absurdities. And we found that every proposed standard of conduct derives its authority from this standard." [5]

The contrary belief that the pleasurable may be morally bad, and the painful morally good, that the pursuit of pleasure is to be disapproved and self-abnegation recommended, he traces back to devil-worship formerly existing among the savages, and yet surviving, not only among the professors of Christianity, but also among men of more advanced culture.

"It is curious," says he, "to see how the devil-worship of the savage, surviving in various disguises among the civilized, and leaving as one of its products that ascetism which in many forms and degrees prevails widely, is to be found influencing in marked ways men who have apparently emancipated themselves, not only from primitive superstitions, but from more developed superstitions. Views of life and conduct which originated

[3] Data of Ethics, § 15. [4] Ibid., §§ 11–15. [5] Ibid., § 15.

with those who propitiated deified ancestors by self-tortures, enter even now into the ethical theories of persons who have years since cast away the theology of the past, and suppose themselves to be no longer influenced by it." [6]

The truth of his conception Herbert Spencer finds amply confirmed by the working of nature itself, there being throughout all its realms no other standard of action followed than pleasure. All sentient creation, he thinks, is guided by the pleasurable, and led on by it to ever higher evolution. Man is no exception. It only happens that the rule is applied to him with more difficulty, inasmuch as the higher degrees of life are at first imperfectly adapted to the environments, and, therefore, frequently demand the renouncement of proximate for remote pleasure.

"From the biological point of view, we see that the connections between pleasure and beneficial action and between pain and detrimental action, which arose when sentient existence began, and have continued among animate creatures up to man, are generally displayed in him also throughout the lower and more completely organized part of his nature: and must be more and more fully displayed throughout the higher part of his nature, as fast as his adaptation to the conditions of social life increases." [7]

48. These views of Herbert Spencer on the morality of human actions have been admired, ever since they became commonly known, as embodying the most advanced thought of the age. There is, however, one point in his theory which does not meet with general approval. If, as he thinks, the end of man consists in personal happiness, it is to this that every moral action must necessarily refer. True, he has modified his individualism by saying that, though not in the ideal state, yet at present the means of happi-

[6] Data of Ethics, § 14b. [7] Ibid., § 35.

ness are immediate ends of pursuit, and that social life is such a necessary means and immediate end. The modification is, however, of no real import. If, when morality is most pure and elevated, special happiness is both the ultimate and immediate end of pursuit, should we not infer that our actions, at least in order to be perfectly moral, ought primarily to regard personal well-being, though harmoniously with the public welfare? But if perfect morality is necessarily egoistic, imperfect morality is certainly not less so.

It would ill befit Mr. Spencer to deny this axiomatic truth, implied as it is in his own theory. Means, by their nature, involve an adjustment to an end. If, then, we ought to make the means of personal happiness objects of immediate pursuit, we must, no doubt, employ them as conducive to personal ends—how could we else, through their use, approach our happiness and final evolution?—and we must employ them with the knowledge of such conduciveness—how could we otherwise consciously do good? The obvious conclusion is that also in our present state, in which but imperfect morality is prevailing, our actions are morally good only as far as they conduce to personal happiness, and are willed and achieved by us as good only if they are willed and achieved as conducive to this end.

49. With this tenet, openly or virtually maintained by Herbert Spencer, the universalistic hedonists avowedly disagree. Nor can they do otherwise. Regarding as man's ultimate end the greatest possible surplus of pleasure to be enjoyed by the greatest possible number, they cannot but define human actions as good or bad according as they make for or against

general happiness. This latter is, in their opinion, the only test of morality: also the most heroic abnegation of self must be judged by it. The following passages from J. S. Mill will sufficiently illustrate the utilitarian teaching in this regard:

"All honor to those who can abnegate for themselves the personal enjoyment of life, when by such renunciation they contribute worthily to increase the amount of happiness in the world: but he who does it, or professes to do it, for any other purpose, is no more deserving of admiration than the ascetic mounted on his pillar. He may be an inspiring proof of what men *can* do, but assuredly not an example of what they *should*.

"The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice itself is a good. A sacrifice which does not increase, or tend to increase, the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted." [8]

50. On inquiring into the manner in which our actions must be related to the ultimate end, we are told by J. S. Mill that, to be morally good, they must not be injurious to our fellow-creatures, but need not have for their motive general happiness. For, to meet the opinion that utilitarianism is exacting too much, because requiring that people shall always act from the love of the general interests of society, he deems it necessary to mitigate the severity of universalistic hedonism, in the same way as Herbert Spencer finds himself compelled to obviate the laxity of individualism.

"Utilitarian moralists," says he, "have gone beyond all others in affirming that the motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action, though much with the worth of the agent."

In a foot-note appended to this passage J. S. Mill explains his mind more clearly.

[8] Utilitarianism, chap. ii.

"The morality of the action," he there remarks, "depends entirely on the intention: that is, upon what the agent *wills* to do. But the motive, that is, the feeling which makes him will so to do, when it makes no difference in the act, makes none in the morality, though it makes a great difference in our moral estimation of the agent, especially if it indicates a good or bad habitual *disposition*—a bent of character from which useful or from which hurtful actions are likely to arise." [9]

What, then, should be intended by the agent in order to act morally? The object mostly aimed at by good actions is the private utility of few, not clashing, however, with the rights of others, or with the public welfare.

"It is," says he, "a misapprehension of the utilitarian mode of thought to conceive it as implying that people should fix their minds upon so wide a generality as the world, or society at large. The great majority of good actions are intended, not for the benefit of the world, but for that of individuals of which the world is made up: and the thoughts of the most virtuous man need not, on these occasions, travel beyond the particular persons concerned, except so far as is necessary to assure himself that in benefiting them he is not violating the rights—that is, the legitimate claims and authorized expectations—of any one else. The multiplication of happiness is, according to the utilitarian ethics, the object of virtue; the occasions on which any person (except one in a thousand) has it in his power to do this on an extended scale, in other words, to be a public benefactor, are but exceptional; and on these occasions alone is he called to consider public utility: in any other case, private utility, the interests of some few persons, is all he has to attend to. Those alone, the influence of whose actions extends to society in general, need concern themselves habitually about so large an object." [10]

On the other hand, he gives to injustice, forbidden by the moral law, the widest extension; for he includes in it not only those actions which are openly detrimental to particular persons, but also those which,

[9] Utilitarianism, chap. ii. [10] Ibid.

though apparently not infringing on individual rights under given circumstances, still, if generally practiced, would be generally injurious.

It may be doubted whether the positivists all agree with J. S. Mill's milder interpretation of utilitarianism. Certainly A. Comte, the founder of positivism, knows no other end to be pursued by the good and virtuous men than the general welfare of humanity; to this end he refers every action, and subordinates every personal interest, and from it he deduces all duties, both in public and in private life.

But, be this as it may, as far as the general conception of the moral good comes into consideration, the hedonistic views are in perfect accord, and, at the same time, plain and consistent. If the greatest possible surplus of pleasure is man's ultimate end, indeed, no action can be good unless it yields pleasure, either directly, because attended by a pleasurable feeling, or indirectly and remotely, because leading to a pleasurable state of mind; thus being, in the former case, a part, in the latter, a means, of happiness. Hedonism in this regard leaving no obscurity, we may turn to the Christian conception of good and evil.

51. The Christian philosophers, as was said above, predicate morality, directly and formally, of the free acts of the will, and of other acts, whether intellectual or organic, only as far as they are controlled by the will, being commanded or permitted by it. They do so, because the will, the supreme inclination towards good, is the final tendency of rational nature. God, then, being the ultimate objective, and formal happiness the ultimate subjective end of man, they term good those acts which, being freely elicited or

commanded by the will, tend towards God, and so dispose us for His possession; and, contrariwise, they term bad those acts which, being freely elicited or commanded by the will, turn us aside from God, and, therefore, render us unfit for union with Him. Consistently with this definition of morality, they are most positive in maintaining that by every good action the ultimate end must, directly or indirectly, be aimed at; for it is the direction to this end that makes up moral goodness, and the deviation from it that constitutes moral badness. It is likewise a necessary consequence of the Christian teaching, that pleasure, particularly such as is organic, must be conceived as having absolutely nothing to do with the morality of our acts. Delectation may be the concomitant both of the virtues of the hero and of the crimes of the debauchee. Not in the agreeableness or disagreeableness of our feelings does the right course of our life consist, but in the direction which the will takes towards God.

52. The conception of moral goodness is undoubtedly made quite definite, if God is regarded as man's ultimate end. He who is in Himself most knowable and perfect and absolutely unchangeable is thus made the supreme moral standard. Still, to complete our knowledge of the morally good, so as to be enabled to determine what actions in particular are right and what are wrong, we need a rule by which to judge infallibly of the relation our conduct has under all circumstances to Him who is the supreme good. This secondary standard of morality we find in our own reason. A few words are necessary in explanation.

Whatever agrees with rational nature as perfection

suitable to it is its good, and whatever agrees with nature as its highest perfection is its highest good. Moreover, nature, conceived as the last principle of operation intrinsic to every existence, involves an adaptation first to acts, and through them to corresponding ends and objects. Do not, in fact, scientists daily bring to light adjustments of organisms to functions much more wonderful than those of the most ingeniously devised mechanisms, and lay open instincts and faculties marvelously fitted to preserve and develop to perfection the life both of individuals and of the species? Nature is thus to every being a standard of what is good for it, and the measure of its final activity, a measure indeed so perfect that whatever operation conforms with it necessarily corresponds also with the end peculiar to the agent. Undoubtedly such, too, must human nature be, the most perfect of all. Have we not, in fact, from its tendencies and capacities, deduced its ultimate destination? But in man, as we have seen, the irrational part is subordinate to the rational, which is in him the highest; wherefore, that only which agrees with the latter can be our real good. Again, in the rational part we distinguish the will, which is the supreme tendency, and reason, which, though it does not determine or necessitate, still guides the will by the light of its knowledge. For it proposes to the same the ends and objects, proximate and remote, to be desired, the means to be employed, the order to be followed in its actions as required by the nature of things, and by man's nature itself. Hence, we may in truth call reason the measure of right action.

However, to be a sure and reliable guide to man,

as nature is to irrational creation, reason must afford to all some certain unerring knowledge, never failing and never to be obliterated. It is, in reality, not deficient in this respect. From its first dawning it is of itself able to perceive several principles concerning our free operations; principles which present themselves as truths necessary in themselves, because founded on the nature of things, and which at the same time are shining with such light and clearness as to compel every one's assent. From them reason deduces a series of practical conclusions, at first with compelling evidence, but as deduction proceeds and becomes more complicate, no longer with the same clearness and assurance. Thus proceeding from intuitive to inferred knowledge, it draws up an order of conduct, marking out the ultimate end to be reached, determining the way by which our actions ought to tend towards it, and lastly deciding what is conducive and what opposed to it, what is necessary and essential, and what only useful for its attainment."[11] These principles, too, evidently perceived as necessary objective truths, being the light in which we judge of conduct and the source and origin of all moral knowledge, are rightly considered as a standard or norm of morality. On this account many philosophers have defined good as that which agrees with the principles of reason, and bad as that which disagrees with them.

53. The Christian theory thus expounded will at once be understood to be widely different from E. Kant's views, which, of late, some thinkers have taken for the true basis of rational morality in order

[11] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.-ii., qu. 94, art. 2, 4; qu. 100, art. 1.

to remedy the evils of hedonism. In Kant's opinion human reason is supreme, absolute, an end unto itself. Hence, he infers that its dictates are the supreme standard, and must be obeyed on their own account, insomuch that in complying with them out of mere respect for their authority the very essence of morality consists. Obedience to them from any other motive, or from the desire of any good to be obtained, he would not regard as moral. Even happiness as the supreme good, and virtue as the necessary condition of the latter, ought not to be aspired to for their own desirableness, but because reason by its laws commands us to create them.

Certainly Kantism is fundamentally opposed to hedonism. But Christian ethics can never consent to espouse it. Man's rational nature, as was shown above, is not its own ultimate end, and consequently it is not the ultimate standard of morality, either. All that the human understanding can do consists in pointing out the right direction to the infinite good. Nor is it in so doing of supreme and absolute authority. Such attributes belong only to the Self-existing Being. What is created is essentially dependent on God, and therefore has no absolute power; not existing of itself, it is subject to Him. Whatever authority it may have is derived from the Divine Authority, and manifests the same as first and supreme. Human reason is, as it were, a ray, a likeness of Divine Reason, not as an emanation from God, but as a production by God from nothing. Consequently it has not first conceived the laws of free action, nor has it established the necessity of their existence; being the voice of the reason of the Creator, it only

makes known to us the truths which He sees first and from eternity. And so likewise is the moral order which human reason draws up not its own creation ; it is but the reflection of the order conceived and contemplated by the Divine Intellect.[12] Divine Reason, then, is the supreme standard of morality ; our reason is only a secondary standard ; for it is not light itself, but light created and derived from a higher source.

Accordingly we must regard the autonomy of reason as a mere philosophical fiction altogether irreconcilable with truth. Not even consistency can be claimed for it by its inventor. Our rational nature can be termed supreme and absolute only when, as from a pantheistic point of view, divine and human reason are confounded ; and only after such confusion may the Stoic axiom hold that to live according to nature is man's ultimate end and the height of morality. The stoics were pantheists, supposing God to be the soul of the world. But Kant did not embrace pantheism, nor can any one who knows creation to be finite.

We may appropriately sum up the teachings of Christian ethics in the following words of the Angelic Doctor :

"For the will, human reason is the proximate, the eternal law, the ultimate rule. An action, therefore, is right if directed to the end in accordance with the order of reason and of the eternal law, but sinful, if it swerves from this direction." [13]

The eternal law here spoken of, it should be remarked, is considered by St. Thomas as identical with Divine Reason ; [14] not as though it were the same with the Divine Intellect considered subjectively, but because it coincides with the objective truths seen by

[12] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 19, art. 4.
[13] Ibid., qu. 21, art. 1. [14] Ibid., qu. 19, art. 4.

God from eternity. In fact, it is not the subjective power of the understanding that serves as a standard or a test by which we judge moral conduct, but the right objective order implied in the first principles of our reason, and eternally contemplated by the Divine Mind, and, therefore, called the eternal law.[15]

54. Our discussion has disclosed the widest possible difference between the old and the new system of ethics. According to hedonism, the standard of the morally good is not above this material universe. The end to which our actions must be directed is organic pleasure. The direction itself of the action to the end is organic adjustment, and the rule by which it is judged is the experience of an organic faculty. Thus, morality is in every respect but an organic perfection. According to Christian ethics, the moral standard is divine and immaterial. The end to be pursued by every good act is God, the Infinite Being. The rule by which the relation of our actions to this end is tested, is ultimately the order conceived by the Divine Reason, and proximately the self-evident and necessary principles of our own reason; the moral act itself is immaterial, and consequently morality is spiritual, it being the perfection of an immaterial act, its adjustment to the supreme and infinite good. There is between the two ethical systems no reconciliation possible; they are opposed to each other like day and night. Those who would reduce them to harmony must attempt to identify affirmation and negation, spirit and matter, God and creation. There is but one way left of arriving at truth, the inquiry into the intrinsic merits of both systems.

[15] Th. Meyer, Institut. Juris Nat., vol. i., nn. 182, 184.

CHAPTER VII.

TRUE MORALITY.

55. The characteristic properties of the morally good and morally evil are their relation to the ultimate end, their natural distinction, their universal knowableness, their desert of the highest approval or disapproval, reward or punishment.
56. As only Christian philosophy has found the true end of man, the definition of the morally good given by it is necessarily correct, the definition given by hedonistic philosophy necessarily wrong.
57. The natural distinction of good and evil is demolished by the hedonistic theories. For according to them the surplus of pleasure to which good and evil refer is relative and variable.
58. And such is also every pleasure constituting the nature of good and evil.
59. A theory of the absolutely good and evil has been devised by Herbert Spencer.
60. But this, besides being untenable, does not do away with the relativity of good and evil.
61. Modern philosophers teach that good and evil, notwithstanding their relativity, are discernible. The positivists think that the morality of our actions is known by induction from experience.
62. Herbert Spencer, going yet farther, holds that right conduct can be demonstrated from general principles registered in our nervous system.
63. Ultimately, however, he relies on experience exclusively, just as well as the utilitarians.
64. Experience alone cannot establish any moral rule whatever, if all is constantly changing, and good and evil are relative to continual changes.
65. The indeterminateness and consequent unknowableness of good and evil are granted by Herbert Spencer himself.
66. Consistently with the hedonistic theories good and evil cannot be regarded as deserving approval or disapproval,

reward or punishment; for, besides being indiscernible from evil, good is deprived of every elevating trait.

67. Moreover, good and evil, not being the outcome of freedom, are not imputable to man.

68. According to Christian ethics, good and evil are absolute and unchangeable; for absolute and unchangeable are both God, the ultimate end, and the nature of the action referred to Him.

69. Good and evil are also universally knowable, not only because they are absolute and naturally distinct, but also because human reason, which is the likeness of the Divine Reason, is naturally qualified to know and to discern them.

70. Besides, they are the highest merit and demerit; for both being done with freedom, the one is the highest elevation, the other the lowest degradation, of man; the one the supremacy, the other the enslavement, of reason.

55. It might, at first sight, seem to be an impossible task to bring out the real merits of the old and the new theories of moral goodness so as convincingly to demonstrate the truth of the one and the falsity of the other. For demonstration, which compels universal assent, must start from principles universally admitted. But can any starting-points or any first truths be common to schools which stand as hostile to each other as light and darkness? Opposed as the two theories are, they yet agree in some notions and characteristic properties of the good. Have we not intimated above that some idea of the morally good is so deeply imprinted on our mind by nature itself as never to be obliterated? Do not all concur in the belief that the morality of our actions consists in their relation to our ultimate end, however differently the end may be defined? Are not philosophers, as well as men of ordinary mental culture, fully convinced that the morally good and the morally bad are diametrically opposed, that the one is man's highest elevation, and the other his lowest degradation, that the one is worthy of the highest praise,

and the other deserving of blame and the severest penalties? Must we not, from such characteristics universally conceded, infer that good and evil are also universally knowable and easily discernible; for were they not thus knowable, no possibility would remain of discriminating right from wrong conduct, and no just reason could exist for rewarding the virtuous and punishing the wicked? And must we not furthermore conclude that the difference between good and evil is not merely contingent or extrinsic, but necessary and intrinsic, since effects and properties thoroughly opposed can result only from opposite natures, and a certain and universal discernment can be had only of things which are not varying and inconstant in their difference?

These, then, are general notions and properties of the moral good, which may be assumed as starting-points in our inquiry into true morality. We need not fear that they will betray us into false conclusions. The reference to the ultimate end, which is confessedly implied in the idea of the good, bears directly on its very nature. The true end, therefore, once being known to us, we shall find by it, also, the true good. The characteristics, too, of right and wrong just spoken of are infallible criteria of truth. They are proved as such by the universality, constancy, and necessity with which they are predicated. Never would mankind, considering the diversity of men, of times, and of human interests, constantly and necessarily agree concerning them, unless compelled by their evidence. But evidence in this regard can be had only when the morally good is in reality endowed with these properties commonly attributed to it, and when, by such endowments, its real nature is manifested and rendered dis-

cernible to all. Their light, then, will lead us in our research to the truth we are seeking.

56. Nor is it difficult to apply these criteria to the two theories. In a preceding chapter it was shown that the hedonists, both egoistic and universalistic, have missed the true end of man. Not happiness conceived as the greatest surplus of pleasure is the goal at which our higher faculties aim by their inborn tendencies. It is objective goodness that they are prompted by their nature to pursue, and rest in when once attained. Organic pleasures cannot be our destiny for another reason. Rational nature soars higher; it tends toward a spiritual object congenial to it, and finds its rest only in the infinite. Christian ethics, by showing that subjective happiness, completing our nature, consists in the most perfect love and contemplation, and that the object of these highest acts is the supreme truth and goodness, has conclusively proved God to be our real ultimate end. The definition of good, therefore, given by hedonism is false, and that given by Christian philosophy is true. If pleasure is not our end, the pleasurable is not the good. But if God is our end, true moral goodness must consist in the tendency to Him.

The conclusion thus arrived at is too plain to need any further illustration. It will, however, be amply confirmed by the criteria which we derived above from the characteristic properties attributed to morality. Let the first to be applied be the necessary and intrinsic difference between good and evil. Above we established this property in the last place, inferring it from others universally recognized. But in reality it is first and supreme in strength and authority,

because it is the basis of all others. Hence it is also most certain and unquestionable.

57. It will not be necessary to demonstrate by many proofs that the essential distinction between good and evil is inconsistent with the hedonistic theories. The hedonists themselves deny such a distinction when they lay it down as a fundamental tenet of theirs that good and evil are not absolute and unchangeable, but relative and changeable; not based on the nature of any thing or action, but on the ever-varying disposition of self-evolving man. The reason that makes them so think is twofold. First, happiness itself, the ultimate end, to which good is conducive, is, in their opinion, not absolute, but relative. The greatest surplus of pleasure attainable during this life is not an absolute quantity, but one that varies with the environments, with the stage of evolution and the degree of civilization reached, with health, with habits and abilities acquired or inherited. As in quantity, so beatifying pleasures change also in quality. As culture progresses, they will be more intellectual; as education, temperament, and character differ, they will be emotional or intellectual, sensual or æsthetical, egoistic or social. Happiness, therefore, will not be the same for the child and the adult, for the savages and the civilized, for the peasant and the sage, for the mechanic and the artist, for the choleric and the phlegmatic. Accordingly, we are told by Mr. Spencer, and, indeed, with much truth, that not only men of different races, but also different men of the same race, and even the same men at different periods of life, have different standards of happiness;[1] and

[1] Data of Ethics, § 63.

that, also, in societies ideally constituted, yet subject to unlike physical circumstances, happiness may vary widely.[2]

58. Then not only the surplus of pleasure over pain, but also every particular pain or pleasure, must be conceived as relative, inasmuch as, with the change of the surroundings and conditions of the sentient being, what is pleasurable may cease to be so or even become painful: and, *vice versâ*, what is painful may become pleasurable. Nobody is more explicit than Mr. Spencer in asserting the relativity of pains and pleasures. The whole of the tenth chapter of his "Data of Ethics" is devoted to this subject. How we have to understand this relativity he explains at full length:

"Not only are the qualities of external things, as intellectually apprehended by us, relative to our own organisms, but the pleasureableness or painfulness of feelings which we associate with such qualities are also relative to our own organisms. They are so in a double sense—they are relative to its structures, and they are relative to the state of its structures." [3]

He then first proves the relativity of pains:

"The painfulness of the feelings produced by forces which tend to destroy organic structures, wholly or in part, is of course common to all creatures capable of feeling. But even here the relativity of feelings may in one sense be asserted. For the effect of a force of given quantity or intensity varies, partly with the size and partly with the structure of the creature exposed to it. The weight which is scarcely felt by a large animal crushes a small one; the blow which breaks the limb of a mouse produces little effect on a horse; the weapon which lacerates a horse leaves a rhinoceros uninjured—and with these differences of injuriousness doubtless go differences of feeling." . . . .

"That pain is relative not to structures only, but to their

[2] Data of Ethics, § 61. [3] Ibid., § 63.

states as well, is also manifest—more manifest, indeed. The sensibility of an external part depends on its temperature. Cool it below a certain point, and it becomes, as we say, numb : and if, by ether-spray, it is made very cold, it may be cut without any feeling being produced. Conversely, heat the part so that its blood-vessels dilate, and the pain which any injury or irritation causes is greater than usual." [4]

After having alleged in proof many examples, he concludes with stating that there is no fixed relation between the acting force and the produced feeling.

"The amount of feeling varies with the size of the organism, with the character of its outer structures, with the character of its nervous system, and also with the temporary states of the parts affected, of the body at large, and of the nervous centres."

The relativity of pleasure is, in Mr. Spencer's opinion, still more conspicuous. To prove it he advances a host of illustrations taken from every realm of the sentient world. It is neither possible nor needful to reproduce them here ; suffice it to remark that they all are adduced to serve as evidence that pleasures, whether cognitional or emotional, depend, like pains, primarily on the existence of a structure which is called into play ; and, secondarily, on the condition of that structure, as fitting it or unfitting it for activity.[5]

The purpose of Mr. Spencer in evidencing the relativity of pains and pleasures is to refute the common assumption "that the agreeableness of certain actions depends on their essential qualities, while other actions are, by their essential qualities, made disagreeable," and to establish the contrary doctrine "that the kinds of action which are now pleasurable will, under conditions requiring the change, cease to be

[4] Data of Ethics, § 64.

[5] Ibid., § 66.

pleasurable, while other kinds of action will become pleasurable," because there arise in the process of evolution from the ever new environments and conditions always new organic adaptations and new structures, the functions of which must needs yield their respective gratifications.

Now, if man's ultimate end consists in happiness—the greatest possible amount of pleasure—and good, either as a part of or as means to it, is the pleasurable and evil is the painful; if not only happiness itself, but every pain and pleasure is essentially relative and changeable: relativity and changeableness must undoubtedly be essential also to good and evil. On this point the hedonistic doctrine could not be stated more clearly, and deduced from fundamental principles more consistently, than it was by Herbert Spencer.

59. Yet, is it not he who speaks of the absolutely good, and lays down a whole theory of it? Does he not find good as the common type implied in all our actions, however varying they may be in pleasurableness, and deduce it from them, as from the operations of brute matter the mechanical laws are inferred by induction and correction? May not Mr. Spencer have been misunderstood and misrepresented, as he complains that he has been in regard to so many points?

Any such fear will vanish as soon as we begin carefully to examine the meaning that he gives his terms. As he expressly warns us, the absolutely good does not mean anything unconditional or eternal, since, in his opinion, right and wrong refer to actions of creatures capable of pleasures and pains,

and imply pleasures and pains as their essential elements.[6] What it really means he unmistakably explains by the following definition:

"The absolutely good, the absolutely right in conduct can be that only which produces pure pleasure—pleasure unalloyed with pain anywhere. By implication, conduct which has any concomitant of pain, or any painful consequence, is partially wrong; and the highest claim to be made for such conduct is, that it is the least wrong which, under the conditions, is possible—the relatively right."[7]

The absolutely good is the good which will be found in the normal state of mankind, when, adaptation being complete, every function will yield pleasure not mixed with any pain whatever, while in the transitional state, which has been, is still, and for yet a long period will be, in progress, in most cases good is the least wrong, the action accompanied with the least pain.

Accordingly Mr. Spencer distinguishes also Absolute and Relative Ethics. The former is "a system of ideal ethical truths, expressing the absolutely right," "an ideal code of conduct formulating the behavior of the completely adapted man in completely evolved society." The latter is the application of the ideal ethical truths as a standard "to the problems of our transitional state in such ways that, allowing for the friction of an incomplete life and the imperfection of existing natures, we may ascertain with approximate correctness what is relatively right."[8] Absolute Ethics he compares to Mechanics or to Astronomy expressing the abstract laws or lines of motion, or to Physiology describing the normal functions of the animal organism; Relative Ethics to

[6] Data of Ethics, § 99. [7] Ibid., § 101. [8] Ibid., §§ 104, 105.

the application of the general mechanical laws to determinate bodies deviating in many points from the ideal motion, or to Pathology dealing with the excess or arrest of functions and the resulting evils.

60. We might at once discard Mr. Spencer's Absolute Ethics as false and absurd. In a former chapter we have already proved the normal state of mankind as described by him to be a fiction, or rather an impossibility. The absolutely right is the degree of morality peculiar to the normal state, the climax of evolution; it must accordingly likewise be fictitious and unreal. Moreover, Mr. Spencer's theory altogether vitiates the conception of the morally good. What he says of the absolutely good is repugnant to the common conviction of mankind. In accordance with his tenets morality ultimately perfect is essentially egoistic, self-happiness being, when once adaptation will be complete, at once the ultimate and immediate end of man. But if we consult the common belief, egoism is the death of morality, and disinterestedness its perfection. Again, in his opinion, pleasurableness constitutes moral goodness, and painfulness moral badness. Hence, human conduct becomes bad as far as it is attended by pain and sacrifice, good in proportion to its agreeableness, and ideally perfect when it yields pleasures alloyed with no pains. The Epicureans may concur with him in this view. But mankind upon the whole has always considered abstinence, patience, endurance, fortitude as great virtues, and has always held those men in highest admiration who endured the greatest sufferings and made the greatest sacrifices for the good commanded by reason. It is in general very danger-

ous for philosophers to regard the common convictions of mankind as erroneous. It is all the more so, if there is question of first and fundamental principles; for liability to errors of this kind presupposes nothing less than the unsoundness of human reason itself. And it is repugnant especially to Mr. Spencer's tenets to regard the universal views of men as essentially wrong. For, as he thinks, they can have been formed only by the accumulated, registered and transmitted experience, not only of individuals, but of the race, which experience is for him the principal criterion of truth.[9]

The relatively good involves in his theory a startling self-contradiction. Moral good and moral evil are opposed to each other as affirmation and negation; for good is the direction towards, evil the deviation from, the ultimate end. They can, therefore, concur in the same action just as little as beauty and ugliness can in the same shape. The action which is substantially in agreement with the last end is essentially good and cannot possibly be bad as disagreeing with it; and, conversely, the action which substantially disagrees with this same end is of necessity bad, and cannot be good as agreeing with it. But according to Mr. Spencer's teaching, most of the moral actions, during incomplete or transitional life, are, because attended by some pain, at the same time morally good and morally bad; insomuch that in multitudinous cases even the best of them are but the least wrong.

But we need not here discuss the merits of the views of Mr. Spencer on this subject. In developing

[9] See Herbert Spencer's latest work on "Justice," § 33.

them he does not subvert the relativity of good, but rather opens a new aspect of it. The ideal good, which he terms absolute, remains relative to human adaptations, which, though complete and no more liable to so many changes as now, still may differ in different individuals and in societies subject to different circumstances. The relatively good, the moral action during the transitional state, is just from its relativity proved by him to vary in its approach to the ideal good, according as, in different environments and in different stages of evolution, the surplus of pleasure yielded by it becomes greater or lesser. This is clearly a statement from which it may be inferred that the degrees of good and bad, also, are relative and variable.

Other hedonistic moralists are no less positive in maintaining the relativity and variability of moral goodness than Herbert Spencer; they are even more unequivocal than he, inasmuch as they avoid the very term of absolute good taken in any sense whatever. Charles Darwin tries to render intelligible the relative difference between good and evil by the following illustration:

"If men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the work-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering." [10]

By the first criterion, then, of true morality, the hedonistic view stands condemned. The true moral good must differ from evil necessarily and intrinsically; it must be absolute and invariable. The hedonists deny this, not merely indirectly or by implication,

[10] Descent of Man, vol. i., chap. iii.

but directly and expressly, and consider the denial as fundamental to their theory. The natural difference between good and evil being the basis of other characteristic properties, this error must necessarily entail the condemnation of the hedonistic view also by the other criteria.

61. It stands to reason that, if good and evil, owing to their relativity, are constantly varying and fluctuating, they cease to be easily discernible and universally knowable. So hedonistic morality lacks the second characteristic mark of true moral goodness. It is difficult to understand how the positivists can eschew this conclusion. They certainly are not willing to grant it. But how do they uphold the possibility of moral knowledge? They maintain that moral, like physical laws, can be known by experience and observation only, and they assign as the reason for this view both the relativity of good and the inability of our mind to penetrate beyond the phenomena into the nature of things. It is, therefore, a famous saying of Prof. Huxley's, that—

"If it can be shown by observation and experiment that theft, murder, and adultery, do not tend to diminish the happiness of society, then, in the absence of any but natural knowledge, they are not social immoralities."

Yet it is not by the observation of a few individuals, nor by the inductive reasoning of all, that moral laws can be ascertained. The inductive method requires a vast multitude of phenomena, gathered from all sides, as the subject-matter to be worked on, and a special scientific skill as the necessary qualification of the mind working on them. Only the experience of mankind can furnish the material from

which general moral precepts may be drawn, and only men of talent and of science can establish them by legitimate reasoning. This is exactly the view of the positivistic school. In J. S. Mill's opinion, the quality of pleasures, the preferableness of the one before the others, can be judged only by those competently acquainted with them, and a verdict of these competent judges, or of the majority of them, must be admitted as final, there being no higher tribunal to be referred to.[11] The author of "The Value of Life" thinks that the moral ideals must be set up by the Parliament of Mankind, the sages and the men of science.

62. But we hear it said that this is not the view of the agnostics, the profounder philosophers. Herbert Spencer, on this point, disagrees with the positivists. As he thinks, the moral laws can be demonstrated not only from experience by induction, but also by deduction from intrinsic causes and general principles.

"The view," says he, "for which I contend is, that morality properly so-called—the science of right conduct—has for its object to determine *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental, and certain other modes beneficial. These good and bad results cannot be accidental, but must be necessary consequences of the constitution of things; and I conceive it to be the business of moral science to deduce, from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds produce unhappiness. Having done this, its deductions are to be recognized as laws of conduct; and are to be conformed to irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery."[12]

Mr. Spencer, therefore, glories in having by far surpassed all moral philosophers before his time; for he thinks he has explained the laws of right conduct

[11] Utilitarianism, chap. ii.

[12] Data of Ethics, § 21.

from causal relations and has brought out their intrinsic necessity, whilst others derive them either from the arbitrary will of God, or from human authorities, or from mere experience, or from intuition, with which they imagine themselves to be divinely endowed. He regards himself superior to the positive school in particular, because it is his method that creates a real science of morals, a system of rational hedonism, while theirs establishes only experimental hedonism.

There are, however, two difficulties in his way. First, how does he come to attain universal principles and to know the intrinsic constitution of things? In his "First Principles of Synthetic Philosophy" he denies, with the sensists, every possibility of *a priori* principles and of universal ideas free from intrinsic contradictions, and repudiates any definite knowledge of the nature of things and of ultimate causes. Recognizing, as he does, but organic faculties, he cannot consistently hold other views; for organic perception does not transcend experience. Moreover, how can he reconcile the doctrine here set forth with the relativity of pleasures and pains, of good and evil, taught above? Did we not hear him strongly condemn the common assumption, as if the agreeableness or disagreeableness of certain actions depended on their essential qualities?

But Mr. Spencer is not the man to be perplexed by difficulties. His philosophical system, we are told by him, is a combination of Kantism and Empiricism. Originally our faculties are, indeed, unfit directly and intuitively to form universal ideas and to penetrate to causal relations, to the nature and constitution of things. But because they are modified by often-

repeated acts, by which like objects and phenomena, regularly succeeding one another, are perceived, experience is registered in them and accumulated, and, according to the law of heredity, transmitted from generation to generation. So transformed, our organic faculties come to have general intuitions, abstract conceptions, and notions of causal relations and universal laws, having inherited them as inborn forms of thought from a long series of ancestors. And so we attain to general or abstract knowledge, which is at once *a priori*, because innate to the individual mind and previous to any activity of its own, and *a posteriori*, because acquired by the experience of preceding generations. By this theory, expounded in the "First Principles of Synthetic Philosophy," [13] Herbert Spencer accounts for the perception of general moral laws and principles.[14]

[13] Chap. i., § 6.

[14] In a letter to J. S. Mill, Herbert Spencer writes: "To make my position fully understood, it seems needful to add that, corresponding to the fundamental propositions of a developed Moral Science, there have been, and still are, developing in the race certain fundamental moral intuitions; and that, though these moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of utility, gradually organized and inherited, they have come to be quite independent of conscious experience. Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space, possessed by any living individual, to have arisen from organized and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed to him their slowly developed nervous organizations—just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought, apparently quite independent of experiences: so do I believe that the experiences of utility, organized and consolidated, through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition—certain emotions, responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility. I also hold that, just as the space-intuition responds to the exact demonstrations

63. Is his explanation to be unreservedly accepted? He knows none but organic faculties. But these, being bodily themselves, cannot represent anything else than the material, and perceiving only what has acted on them, can recognize the individual only and not the abstract and universal, which as such can neither exist nor act. Let, therefore, the organic powers become ever so perfect in consequence of acquired habits, they will always remain absolutely unable to form universal ideas or to apprehend causal relations. Mr. Spencer's theory is certainly insufficient to disprove this axiomatic truth.

Repeated acts, by leaving traces in their respective faculties, enhance the ability of performing operations of their own kind, but do not create new powers fit to perform operations of an altogether different and higher nature. Effects cannot transcend their causes. Now the cognitional acts by which, in Mr. Spencer's opinion, our faculties are to be perfected and elevated, being merely experimental, represent but individual objects, and, according to the agnostic view, apprehend no causal relations, but only the sequence of phenomena. They, consequently, can only engender facility of experience and observation. The power of intuition into universal truths, or of perceiving the causes of things, they can generate just as little as habitual drunkenness can produce soberness, or as continual exercise in walking can give the ability of flying.

In any case, Mr. Spencer has to encounter the

of geometry, and has its rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them; so will moral intuitions respond to the demonstrations of Moral Science, and will have their rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them."—Data of Ethics, § 45.

same difficulties as the positive school, which relies on personal conscious experience, digested according to the inductive method. Either theory destroys the possibility of moral knowledge; in either of them good and evil cease to be easily discernible and universally knowable.

64. Experience alone, however long continued, however much accumulated, whether in our memory or in our organic structures, can never establish a universal truth or law; for it can never comprise more than a limited number of phenomena, which is farther from universality than the unit is from a million. But, it is said, we may legitimately infer the future from the past, the nature of the whole from that of the parts.

True, we may, but by the help only of strictly universal principles known intuitively and not resulting from experience. From merely particular premises no general conclusion can be deduced, as the limited cannot contain the unlimited.

Modern positivists and agnostics are least of all at liberty to derive from experience any definite general rule concerning human conduct. The reason lies in the continual and universal variation to which man, in their opinion, is subject. Evolution, which they so strongly advocate, constantly changes the constitution of things in all directions. Some Darwinists have, on this account, of late gone so far as to deny the constancy even of physical and chemical laws. Organisms, being much more complex than brute matter, are, under the varied influences to which they are exposed, liable to still more numerous and deeper constitutional changes. Uniformity of nature

is thus done away with; yet on this uniformity rests the certainty of inductive conclusions.

By far more multiplied than the specific, are the individual variations. There are not two human beings that do not differ from one another in many regards. And these individual differences must grow wider in proportion as the human race extends in space and progresses in time, because with wider expansion and longer duration the influences exercised become more manifold, the varieties more multiplied and accumulated, the interdependence among men more complex.

Bearing in mind the relativity of good and evil, of the pleasurable and the painful, as just stated, and the continual changes to which man is subject, we arrive at the following verdict: From the past no conclusion can be drawn concerning the morality of any line of future conduct and least of all concerning conduct in the ideal state, because evolution constantly changes human nature, to which right and wrong are relative. Nor can, from the moral code of one nation precepts be taken for another, the stages of evolution always varying among the different races and societies. And within the same stage of evolution, and the same nation, owing to the individual differences of men, intrinsic and extrinsic, the generalizations of good and evil are so vague and indeterminate that none but the most indefinite rules of conduct can be established. To apply them with certainty to any particular man, or any particular action, must, in most cases, be very difficult, if not altogether impossible. It must be so for the learned, to such an extent that no consent could exist among

them, and it must be much more so for the unlearned and the illiterate. How should these latter, by far the majority of mankind, help themselves? Should they, perhaps, in their perplexities, convene the Parliament of Mankind? Even if this were possible, what would be the result, considering the differences among the sages?

The final result is very clear. Certainty as to any rule of conduct must vanish; universal doubt must prevail among the cultured, and complete ignorance among the rest, as to what is right and wrong for particular persons and in particular circumstances. Good and evil are no longer universally knowable and certainly discernible.

65. It remains for us to confirm our conclusion by the sayings of Mr. Spencer, whom we have seen to be, among all hedonists, the stanchest vindicator of the certainty and reasonableness of moral science. Having set forth the incalculableness of happiness on account of its indeterminateness, he comes to acknowledge that the means to it—the moral good—are likewise indeterminate. "To the double indeterminateness of the end has to be added the indeterminateness of the means." Hence he quite consistently derives a special difficulty of adjusting our acts to personal, and, much more, to social happiness.

"If," he says, "in pursuing his own ends, the individual is liable to be led by erroneous opinions to adjust his acts wrongly, much more liable is he to be led by erroneous opinions to adjust wrongly more complex acts to the more complex ends constituted by other men's welfare. It is so if he operates singly to benefit a few others; and it is still more so if he co-operates with many to benefit all." [13]

[13] Data of Ethics, § 57.

It fully harmonizes with this statement, when, later on, notwithstanding his upholding a code of absolute moral laws, he maintains the impossibility of determining, with any precision, the right line of conduct in numberless cases.

"Instead of admitting," says he, "that there is in every case a right and a wrong, it may be contended that in multitudinous cases no right, properly so-called, can be alleged, but only a least wrong; and, further, it may be contended that, in many of these cases, where there can be alleged only a least wrong, it is not possible to ascertain with any precision which is the least wrong." [14]

He afterwards illustrates his assertion with examples, and concludes with saying:

"They (*these instances*) will show that, throughout a considerable part of conduct, no guiding principle, no method of estimation, enables us to say whether a proposed course is even relatively right; as causing, proximately and remotely, specially and generally, the greatest surplus of good over evil." [15]

He might confidently have said that not only in multitudinous cases, but generally, the right course of conduct is unascertainable. If the end, if happiness, is unknowable, owing to its indeterminateness, as he says, then the means also to attain it are unknowable. There is, logically, no contradiction of this conclusion possible. We cannot know the ways to an unknown goal; we cannot know how to arrange parts, if the whole which they ought to form is unknowable to us.

66. The unknowableness of the moral good, being evil in itself, is the germ of further evil. It involves the absence of the third property characteristic to morality. How can, in the eyes of all mankind, the good raise man to his highest elevation, and

[14] Data of Ethics, § 100. [15] Ibid., § 103.

the bad lower him to utmost degradation, if the one is neither intrinsically and necessarily distinct, nor certainly and universally discernible from the other? Yet the new philosophers claim this attribute most vigorously for the morality taught by them. They regard the moral good as the object of the most ardent enthusiasm—as the climax of evolution, as a divine tendency in the world, as the deity itself intrinsic to the universe. We must, therefore, enter on a short inquiry into the loftiness of the new morality.

Above we heard Mr. Spencer say that the whole sentient world is guided by the pleasurable, man being no exception; that the connections between beneficial actions and pleasures, which arose when sentient existence began and have continued in all succeeding ages, are generally displayed in man, also, throughout the lower part of his nature, and must be more fully displayed throughout the higher part of his nature. It must be so, indeed, if man is but an organic body, evolved from the brute, and distinct from it only in degree, without any immaterial element in him. But, if so, the standard of human action is not essentially higher than that of animal operation. The reign of reason is abolished. Any object transcending the material world, any good higher than organic pleasure, any pursuit reaching beyond the well-being of sentient existence, is deemed absurd and impossible. Is not this the gospel of the flesh, completed and systematized? Does it not sound like the bitterest sarcasm, if, thus marked with the sign of the beast, we are said to have been elevated to the highest possible rank?

Furthermore, the new morality perfects only the

external man, and has nothing to do with his interior, with the higher part of human nature. As Herbert Spencer says, moral conduct comprises but visible acts, and is the externally manifested adjustment of the same to ends; the moral faculty itself is nothing but an organic adaptation to external pleasure-yielding actions. The morality of the action, we are told by J. S. Mill, does not depend on the motive from which it springs.

"No system of ethics requires that the sole motive of all we do shall be a feeling of duty; on the contrary, ninety-nine out of a hundred of all our actions are done from other motives, and rightly done so, if the rule of duty does not condemn them."

It is difficult to see how such morality necessarily differs from the righteousness of those who were likened to "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness."

We shall form the most correct estimate of the elevation brought about by the new morality if we recall to mind some tenets of the hedonistic theory concerning man's ultimate end. Human conduct, we understand, being the last and highest stage of evolution, has no end above itself to which it refers, but is an end unto itself. How, then, can it be heightened, and how can man be ennobled by it? It is chiefly the object desired, the end pursued, that determines the worth of an action of the will; for volition is inclination to good, the embracing of it, the union with it. If the good willed is higher than man himself, he rises by volition above himself; if lower, he degrades himself. Hedonism, therefore, proposing no superior ob-

ject to human conduct, but making it its own end, renders any elevation by our actions impossible, even by those that are considered most perfect and moral. It matters little that the highest evolution—for this coincides with happiness—is made our ultimate end. Also, the supreme stage of evolution possible is not above man; it is his action attended by the most intense and refined pleasure. The same is to be said of social happiness taken as the ultimate end. For, as pleasure is enjoyed only individually, though in company with and by the help of others, general happiness is but the sum total of personal happinesses—a conclusion which has its confirmation in the axiom that the love of self is the model of the love of others: meaning that we ought to wish for others the same good, and consequently the same happiness, which we wish for ourselves.

Any higher standard, then, any loftier object, any sublimer end, being denied, human action, completely left to itself, cannot rise to any height; organic and material itself, it is bound down to what is earthly; it comes in no contact with the sublime and eternal; it is not guided by an immaterial intellect; it is not directed by any higher light, and does not spring from exalted motives.

67. Good, being thus deprived of its elevating character, must lose, also, in our sight its claim to the highest approbation and reward, which is the last of its attributes mentioned above. Undoubtedly the merit of an action rests on its exalted character, as, contrariwise, the lowness of the same is the intrinsic cause of its demerit. Excellence is the first condition of praiseworthiness, insomuch that the two are

always in strict proportion. Still, there is yet another condition necessary for an action to deserve praise and reward, or, on the contrary, blame and punishment. The action must be free, that is, must have been elicited or commanded by free-will. We do not praise a tree for its growth or its delicious fruits, or an animal for its usefulness; nor do we, strictly speaking, punish it for its hurtfulness, though we defend ourselves against the harm that may be done by irrational creation, or enhance the attachment of brutes to us, by associating good with their services and evil with their mischief. Nor do we look on every action of a human being as worthy of reward, however conformable to law, or as punishable, however strictly forbidden it may be. The idiot, the child before the dawn of reason, is subject to no penalty. What is done in ignorance or extorted by force, or performed by sheer natural necessity, is neither merit nor guilt. This is the view taken by all lawgivers and acted on by all civilized nations.

Why are some actions neither approved nor disapproved of, others, on the contrary, praised or censured, rewarded or punished? The actions of the former kind are not free and, therefore, not attributable to the immediate agent as to their accountable cause, he being predetermined to act so and prevented from acting otherwise. They must rather be imputed to the cause, or to the set of causes, which have produced such a determination in the agent. Contrariwise, the actions of the other kind, which are rewarded or punished, are thought to be free, and hence directly attributable to the human agent, he having it in his power to perform them or not to perform them, and

thus to act from self-determination. An action, then, to deserve praise or blame, reward or punishment, must be imputable to the agent as to its proper self-determining cause.

The new moralists, as we have seen, all deny the freedom of will, conceived as self-determination. They consequently cannot, in strictness, praise or censure any action. If they, nevertheless, regard certain lines of conduct as approved, the approbation must be of the same kind as that bestowed on a steam-engine for its efficiency, or on a fox for its cunning, or on a parrot for its speech. Taking into account that, in their opinion, the best human action is the fruition or the procuring of the greatest possible amount of organic pleasure, they can praise man only for the enjoyments obtained by inherited or acquired skill, in the same way as we may look with some admiration at the delight with which the tiger devours his prey, or at the strength and adroitness with which he kills a heifer, in order to provide himself and his young with food. Nor should they allow any man to be blamed or punished otherwise than an idle drone or a useless beast of burden is despised, or a rabid dog is restrained. Evidently hedonism cannot stand the last criterion of true morality. Its moral good lacks worthiness of praise and reward in their strict and proper sense, whereas, in the judgment of all mankind, good is the highest merit.

Our inquiry thus results in the conclusion that the hedonistic theory has stripped the moral good of all its characteristic properties. As it is described by the most prominent hedonists, it is not absolute and unchangeable, but relative and changeable ; not essen-

tially distinct from evil, but mixed with it and convertible into it; not an object easily and universally knowable, as it ought to be in order to be universally practicable, but scarcely discernible and mostly unknown; it does not elevate man to his ideal excellence and render him worthy of the highest praise and the highest reward, but degrades him to the level of irrational creation, and, not being done with freedom, deprives him of merit and praiseworthiness.

68. No long discussion will be necessary to show that Christian ethics clothes the moral good with all its due characteristic attributes. According to the Christian view, good is, indeed, absolute and unchangeable. Absolute is man's ultimate end, God, and absolutely necessary and unchangeable is the nature both of man and of his actions. Such is the essence or intrinsic constitution of every being, not as though finite things could not come into existence and go out of it, but because, whether conceived in thought only, or existing in reality, they always consist of the same essential constituents. But if such is the end of man, and if such are his actions, the relation, also, of human activity to the ultimate end is absolutely necessary, resulting as it does from the nature of both the one and the other. There are actions which in their very nature involve a direction to God; as, for instance, the belief in Him, the love of Him, or the submission unto Him. Other actions, on the contrary, there are which cannot but be adverse to God; as, for instance, the willful ignorance, or the denial of His existence and His perfections, hatred of Him, or contempt and neglect of His laws. The former, therefore, are by their nature good, and hence

with absolute necessity and unchangeably good; the latter by their nature necessarily and unchangeably bad.

We arrive at the same conclusion, if we argue from the standard measure of the moral good, whether proximate or ultimate, that is, from reason, human or divine. Reason penetrates the essences of things and the relations implied therein. It so conceives the right order required by the nature of rational existence, the moral order, consisting in the subserviency of the body to the spirit in each man, in the subordination of all rational creatures to the Creator, and in the interdependence of the creatures among themselves in accordance with their essential attributes. Now there are actions which by their nature, and, therefore, necessarily, agree with the right order conceived by reason, and there are others that naturally disagree with it. To the first belong the acts of justice, benevolence, charity, obedience to lawful authority; to the latter, acts contrary to the virtues just named. Of these Aristotle says:

"It is not every action, nor every passion, that admits of the mean state; for some have their badness at once implied in their name; as, for example, malevolence, shamelessness, envy, and amongst actions, adultery, theft, homicide. For all these, and such as these, are so called from their being themselves bad, not because their excesses or their defects are bad. In these, then, it is impossible ever to be right, but we must always be wrong."[16]

Nor is it to be feared that whilst mankind is evolving, human nature will change, and, therefore, require essentially new lines of conduct. Whatever changes man may undergo, he will always remain a rational

[16] Ethics, book ii., chap. vi., 10.

creature dependent on his Maker, and his actions and emotions will always range under love or hatred, justice or injustice, temperance or intemperance, and the like virtues or vices.

There are, then, actions which are intrinsically good, and others which are intrinsically bad; and there is, consequently, a natural distinction between them which can never and under no circumstances be obliterated. There is a moral order, founded on the nature of rational existence and absolutely necessary, which it is not even within the compass of Divine Omnipotence or the Divine Will to change or to set aside. For, as God cannot effect that two and two are five, so He cannot effect that love and submission to Him, justice, patience, temperance, should become vices, and hatred of Him, injustice, anger, intemperance, become virtues. Not as though He were subject to any higher necessity. But as His power cannot bring into existence what, on account of its intrinsic contradiction, is nothingness, or the negation of being, so must His will, being infinitely holy and concordant with infinite wisdom, love as good whatever is conformable, and hate and detest as evil whatever is repugnant, to right order.

It is, therefore, a great mistake of Mr. Spencer, and one which we should not expect from a man of his erudition, to say that according to the Christian theory the Divine Will arbitrarily decides the goodness or badness of human conduct. True, just at the dawning of modern philosophy, R. Descartes held the opinion that the morality of all our actions was determined by God's pleasure. But Christian philosophy as embodied in the Scholastic system has always

taught the absolute and essential difference between the morally good and the morally bad. The great teachers of the schools laid it down as a fundamental truth that the moral order rests proximately on created rational nature and ultimately on the Divine Nature, the source and archetype of all created existence, and that, founded on the Divine Essence, infinitely perfect, and resplendent in its brightest beauty, this same order is from all eternity contemplated by the intellect of God, and embraced by His will with infinite and necessary love.

69. Such being the nature of the moral good, its knowableness is beyond all doubt. The ultimate end, the supreme standard, absolute and divine as it is, stands out clearly and distinctly. The relations to it are permanent and unchangeable, because necessarily resulting from rational nature. The ability of perceiving them is essential to human reason, the likeness of the Divine Reason, the reflection of the Eternal Light, and is altogether necessary to lead us back to God, the supreme and ultimate end. Hence it is that to all men whose understanding is to some degree developed rational nature is a source of certain general truths or principles intuitively known. From these a stream of light is shed over our actions, as from the sun the rays issue which illumine the visible world; and by them we are intrinsically necessitated to judge our conduct as good or bad. It happens that this intellectual light illustrates but dimly some actions of a more complex nature and capable of being judged only by long and difficult reasoning; but it does not, therefore, cease to shine in us and shed its full lustre

on the lines of conduct less intricate and more open to its immediate influence.

70. Need we further state that moral goodness, as conceived by Christian philosophy, is man's highest elevation? It is the direction of our actions to the infinite good, our qualification for its attainment by the most perfect knowledge and love; it is the reign of reason in man, the subjection of our lower tendencies to the highest immaterial faculty, and of this itself to God, the supreme goodness; it is the realization of the right order based on the Divine Nature itself and from eternity contemplated by God's intellect and loved by His infinitely holy will, of that order, in which spiritual, eternal and divine beauty is resplendent, and which, fully carried out, accomplishes in us the likeness of the Deity.

Moral badness, on the contrary, is the defacing, in our soul, of that beauty which is the reflection of God, the disturbance of the order required by rational nature, the enslaving of reason to what is lowest in us, the sway of rebellious passions. Indeed, good is man's highest elevation, and evil his lowest degradation.

Man being free and master of his actions, moral goodness, sublime and elevating though it be, must be attributed also to his self-determination, and, therefore, renders him worthy of the highest possible praise and reward, as, *vice versâ*, moral badness, being the utmost demerit, is the utmost disgrace and the just cause of the heaviest penalties.

It is Christian ethics alone that maintains the height and merit of morality, indeed, the sublimest height and merit conceivable, and at the same time

shows moral goodness to be knowable and attainable to all; while, in the hedonistic theories, morality is at once divested of its exalting attributes and hidden from the great majority of mankind.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORAL IDEALS.

71. Moral ideals are necessary;
72. And are proposed by the new as well as the old ethical theories.
73. Herbert Spencer's supreme ideal is not suited to exercise a moral influence.
74. The particular hedonistic ideals are all highly objectionable. Mental culture is of itself not moral. Intellectual gifts and scientific pursuits are compatible with a low grade of morality, and are, according to modern thought, not qualified to attain to truth.
75. The ideals of beauty are blighted by the new philosophy.
76. Art is degraded by it.
77. Love as a moral ideal, in the new theory, means the rule of the strongest and most dangerous passion.
78. Virtue, according to the hedonistic view, is not good of itself.
79. Rather it is, and will always remain, an evil.
80. Divine Holiness is proposed by Christian ethics as the primary and supreme moral ideal.
81. The permanent resemblance with Divine Holiness is the secondary moral ideal. In it virtue consists which is defined as a habit that renders good both the act and the doer.
82. Virtue resides primarily in the will and only secondarily in the other faculties.
83. The ideals of Christian ethics are the highest conceivable, and exercise a most wholesome influence even on the opponents of theism.

71. The good, like the beautiful, admits of degrees. It is the more perfect, the nearer it brings us to our ultimate end, the more completely it realizes in rational creation the right order of reason. In its highest degree, where it is free from defect and unalloyed with any imperfection, the good is ideal, being such as it is represented by our ideas and exists in our mind. Whatever is endowed with such goodness, pure and perfect, we call an ideal of morality, just as that which is resplendent with unblemished beauty is an ideal of art. Though having but a mental existence, the ideal is in its bearings eminently practical. Serving as a model to be imitated, and being proposed as the most attractive object of pursuit, it becomes a cause of moral greatness. Every rational operation, to be perfect, must be elevated by a lofty object; the human will, especially, in determining our conduct must have in view the purest model and aspire to the noblest ends; not attracted by them, it cannot overcome the weight of the lower tendencies in human nature and rise to what is great and perfect, and not directed by them, it cannot tend to the eternal order of right reason.

72. Hence we easily understand why there is no ethical theory that does not create moral ideals and recommend their pursuit. Hedonism, no less than Christian ethics, is concerned with ideals.

"The ultimate end of education," says Professor Huxley, "is to promote morality and refinement by teaching men to discipline themselves, and by leading them to see that the highest, as it is the only content, is to be attained not by grovelling in the rank and steaming valleys of sense, but by

continually striving towards those high peaks where, resting in eternal calm, reason discerns the undefined but bright ideal of the highest good—'a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night.'"[1]

Yet the all-important question is what ideals are proposed by each moral theory. Destined as they are to lead the intellect to the highest, and to inspire the will with the love of the best, they are real tests of the intrinsic value of the doctrine that has created them. Our inquiry into true morality would be incomplete, were we not to add a short discussion of them.

What ideals do the hedonists set up? Of course, perfect happiness, the enjoyment of the greatest possible amount of pleasure and freedom from pain, must, according to their views, be the first and chief ideal. This we have already understood from Herbert Spencer. But as this ideal is at present an impossibility, hedonism had to create others easier of pursuit and nearer to reality. These are the pleasures enjoyable during this life, which, refined and elevated in character, and as free as possible from pain actual and future, are the nearest approach to happiness. As such are pointed out intellectual delights attending the knowledge of truth or the contemplation of the beautiful in art and in nature, and the delight enjoyed by the will in love and in the practice of virtue. The attractiveness and reality of these ideals is thus described by Mr. Pater:

"Each moment some form grows perfect in hand or face,

[1] Quoted by Mr. Mallock, Is Life Worth Living? p. 38.

some tone on the hills or sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us. . . . . While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set free the spirit for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers and curious odors, or the work of the artist's hand, or the face of one's friend." [2]

73. Speaking of the absolutely good, we have already passed judgment on Mr. Spencer's supreme ideal. What he sets up as the highest type is but a lower degree of morality prevailing in former ages and now embodied in our nervous system; nay, if credence is to be given to the testimony of mankind, it is no morality at all, but rather the reverse of it. In any case the effect which Mr. Spencer's ideals produce must be very low, whether the kind of influence which they are apt to exercise, or the capability of moral elevation which is left to man in his theory, is taken into account.

According to Spencerian views the moral man is nothing but the product of the lower stages of evolution. His habits are those of preceding ages inherited and strengthened; his knowledge or sense of right is the past experience of the useful and pleasurable accumulated. His entire moral faculty, therefore, is immovably anchored in the low and imperfect without any tendency to the purer and more enlightened virtues of higher stages. Mr. Bixby says very correctly:

"According to the 'Data of Ethics' moral ideas are but the distant echo of the past. How, then, can society be other than

[2] Quoted by Mallock, Is Life Worth Living? p. 148.

rigidly immovable? Or, if there is progress, must it not be by the immoral, not the moral, that the progress is to be made?"

"If our sense of right were but an organic registration of society's past experience, our sense of duty would rather urge us to conform to the instructions of the past experience, and passively yield to that stream of ancestral habit in which all about us drift along."[3]

While man's capability of moral elevation is lessened, the moral influence of the Spencerian ideal is deadened. Man cannot rise to higher and purer morality without great efforts and sacrifices, without self-abnegation and revulsion of his feelings. But by the new ideal all this is condemned as more or less immoral, because more or less painful. In accordance with it any pain undergone is a moral evil; sweet rest, exempt from troubles that may harass us, the climax of virtue. Let it not be said that man, to be happy and moral, must seek not only present, but also future pleasures, and the latter chiefly, if they are greater in amount or superior in quality. The renunciation of the present gratification and the work to be done for a distant good will always render the pursuit of a future pleasure actually painful and evil, whereas the present enjoyment of pleasure is always actually agreeable and good. But the actual moral good is of necessity preferable to the actual moral evil; for the latter must be hated and detested, whatever may be its later consequences, the former is always worthy of our love. Those, then, who prefer rather to enjoy the present gratification than to renounce it for a future one must be regarded as living up to Mr. Spencer's ideal most faithfully and consistently.

[3] The Crisis in Morals, pp. 182, 185.

74. Concerning mental culture, whether it consists in the pursuit of science or in the cultivation of arts, we must remind the reader that morality cannot directly be predicated of it, as in general it is not predicable of the acts of the understanding, but of those of the will only. There are, and always have been, men of great talents, renowned for scientific or artistic achievements, who, being selfish, self-conceited, sensual, jealous, unjust, stand by no means on a high grade of morality, and would stand on a still lower grade, if all religious influence were eliminated, and intellectual culture were made the supreme ideal of human conduct. The reason is quite plain. The will does not necessarily follow the intellect in its flight; on the contrary, having the intellect to a great extent under its sway, it may render knowledge subservient to undue gratifications of human passions and to the fulfillment of illicit desires; and, what happens but too often, it may breed of the brightest intellectual gifts, intolerable pride, haughtiness, and arrogance. Our prisons might advance all the evidence necessary to prove this proposition.

As to the pursuit of science in particular, its pleasures are said to consist in the possession and in the communication of truth. Are all truths pleasant? Is remorse of conscience, or the law that restricts our desires and restrains our passions, an agreeable truth? Would not just the reverse be much more agreeable to many? And has not the spreading of moral truth always required the greatest sacrifices, sometimes even that of life, on account of the contradictions it has en-

countered? But let us go directly to the point. The philosophical systems on which hedonism is based, being all more or less skeptical, have rendered the attainment of truth impossible. They leave to man no other cognitive power than the internal and external senses; but the senses, being unable to grasp relations, cannot judge of truth, which is the conformity between cognition and objective reality. Nay, they have destroyed truth itself so completely as to annihilate every element of it. According to the agnostic view, our faculties are unfit to know the objectively-real world; they only apprehend our own impressions and mental states, not things as they are in themselves. As far as they represent them as existing without us, in a universe distinct from us, they are deceptive, causing in us illusions by which the forms of the mind are projected beyond us. Nor is there any ground on which external realities could be maintained. As they are not directly attainable, so can they neither be inferred from our impressions. For the principle of causation, and in general all abstract notions and universal judgments based on them, are mere mental creations, which are void of any objective validity; nay, are, after a careful analysis, found to be self-contradictory. Especially are we bound so to conceive of the Self-existent Being, which is the ultimate cause and source of all being, the personal God, distinct from the material universe and clothed with spiritual attributes. If, nevertheless, the agnostics speak of truth and reality, they take these terms in a meaning widely different from that in which they are commonly understood. In Mr. Spencer's philosophy, truth is conformity between presen-

tation and representation, between faint and vivid manifestations in consciousness, between things as expected and as perceived; and reality is not the cause or object corresponding to our impressions or ideas,—this is the view only of the peasant and the metaphysician,—but the persistence of a manifestation in consciousness.[4]

What ideal pleasure can yet remain to be enjoyed in the possession of truth, if truth itself is abolished, and in place of the assent given to it there is but doubt or ignorance, if the mental faculties are demolished or falsely conceived, if there is nothing left except phenomena and their sequence and likeness or unlikeness, if being is denied in its source and in its causes?

75. With the destruction of truth, beauty, also, is rendered unknowable, and the source of æsthetical pleasures is dried up. For what is beauty? It is, as has been very appropriately said, the splendor of truth, perfect unity in variety, symmetry and harmony, co-ordination or subordination by which parts are fitted into one whole and adapted to one end; it is objective perfection and integrity manifested to us in a manner suitable to our cognitive powers. The beautiful so constituted is, like truth, unknowable, or, rather, is an impossibility, if all its constituent perfections are unreal, and if the mind itself, because organic and material, is incapable of perceiving relation, order, dependence, unity. Agnostics and positivists, to whom the spirituality and simplicity of the human soul is an abomination, ought to be consistent enough to disavow the possibility of æsthetical pleasures, which result from spiritual contemplation only.

[4] See First Principles, part ii., chap. iii.

It is art especially that leads us to the delightful perception of beauty, as science and philosophy afford us the perception of truth; for art, by its works, creates the beautiful or discovers it in nature. How does it achieve so noble a task? Not by merely gratifying our senses or our imagination: this is its degradation. Its chief function is idealization; that is, the conception and representation of the ideals of beauty. As to this, the greatest critics of all ages are in full agreement. And what are these ideals? They are not the sum total of experience, of the phenomena perceived and classified according to likeness. They are above all individual and concrete existence; they are the models after which the latter is shaped, heightened and perfected. The ideal is a perfect nature grasped by the genius of the artist, absolute, pure, complete, above time and space, supreme and eternal. Positivism and agnosticism must of necessity destroy all ideals. They deny with the possibility of conceiving them also their supreme archetype. There is, according to the agnostic view, nothing above the transitory phenomena, no perfection absolute, pure and eternal; there is no beauty perfect in itself from which ideals might be derived, no elevation from which they come down to us, no light and splendor from which they emanate or of which they are a reflection. The new philosophy substitutes the real for the ideal, and the sensual for the beautiful. But hence the decadence of art must result.

76. From the many able critics who have called the general attention to so evil a consequence, I shall quote only Mr. W. S. Lilly.

"The philosophy of relativity," he says, "interpreting and synthetizing the thought dimly working in the general mind, empties truth of its old meaning. It derationalizes art, as it derationalizes ethics. It banishes the essential element of objectivity alike from our knowledge of what is right and from our love of what is beautiful. It conceives of ethics as artificial rules deduced from immemorial experience of utility transmitted by heredity. It conceives of art as mere mechanism for the production of its *summum bonum* 'agreeable feeling;' a casual coincidence of picturesque attitudes and sensations, passing with the passage of the moment which gives them birth, and owing their origin to time and climate, to national character and circumstances."[5]

Of the modern artistic productions the same author writes:

"Walk through any collection of paintings of the day, say the Exhibition of the Royal Academy in London or the French *Salon*. What do the works which hang on the wall speak of? Here is a picture which reveals skill of hand. There is one which manifests power of execution. Fantastic, sentimental, realistic, ambitious are the most laudatory adjectives which are wont to occur as we pass by the medley of naked goddesses and unclothed women, the landscapes and the portraits, the *genre* scenes and the historical panoramas. It has been well remarked that in the pictures of the old masters you have not merely a natural scene, but the soul of the painter who looked upon it. The attribute of soul is precisely what is wanting in modern art. I speak generally, and would, of course, allow exceptions. . . . . All that our artists, whether painters or sculptors, usually aim at. . . .is to copy exactly, to reproduce phenomena, to describe with minute exactitude and ever increasing freedom the obvious, the superficial, which in most cases is the vulgar, the gross, the ignoble. They are, in Charles Lamb's phrase, 'deeply corporealized and enchained hopelessly in the grovelling fetters of externality.' And this they call 'realism.'. . . . In its deep paralyzed subjection to physical objects, art seeks to make itself what is called 'scientific.' It aims at speaking to the senses by precise delineation of the physical form, by accurate presentment of the passions of which that form is an

[5] On Right and Wrong, 2d ed., p. 226.

instrument. And here it achieves a certain measure of success. . . . . But it speaks merely to the senses. It leaves nothing in the mind for fancy to feed upon. Barren in nobleness and void of dignity, the arts of design, as they exist among us, proclaim that 'glory and loveliness have passed away' from common life."[6]

Thus we see the first two hedonistic ideals, intellectual and æsthetical pleasures, lowered or annihilated by hedonism itself. A strange irony of fate, indeed, or rather a strange self-contradiction of the new moralists! They undermine by their own theories the ground on which they pretend to elevate mankind to the highest degree of morality.

77. Still it might be said that this failure is not fraught with important consequences, inasmuch as the errors implied regard the intellect, and not the will, the proper seat of moral goodness. Let us, then, likewise examine the two pleasures of the will thought by the hedonists to be the highest—love and virtue.

Love, and by it is meant that between the sexes, is looked on as a chief ideal, not only because its intense delight is more free from pain than any other, but also because it is the root of altruism. The high idea entertained of it is well set forth by Mr. Mallock in the following words:

"The imaginative literature of the modern world centres chiefly about this human crisis, *love*; and its importance in literature is but a reflection of its importance in life. It is, as it were, the sun of the world of sentiment—the source of its lights and colors, and also of its shadows. It is the crown of man's existence; it gives life its highest quality; and, if we can believe what those who have known it tell us, earth under its influence seems to be melting into, and to be almost joined with heaven."[7]

[6] On Right and Wrong, pp. 223, 224, 225. [7] Is Life Worth Living? p. 103.

For a moralist it will, after cooler reflection, not be possible to idealize love with so much enthusiasm. A moral ideal must be good and perfect in itself, nay, good in an eminent degree; and in the hedonistic view especially the ideal, being an essential part of happiness, must be good supremely and independently of any higher rule of morality. To make love, then, an ideal in this sense is to set it free from every control and to establish it as a law unto itself. But love is an animal passion and probably of all the strongest, which, once enkindled and granted free scope, enslaves all the other powers of man and recoils from no excess. Consequently, as an ideal it means the full and unrestrained sway of a low and most vehement passion, with the implication that all its gratifications, however unrestricted, are as such and in themselves in a high degree good and moral. The conclusion may seem to many shocking; but it will be found, after a careful consideration, to be conformable with truth.

The love between the sexes is organic, based on organic structure, enkindled and entertained by organic causes and attractions, tending to organic or bodily communion. And such exclusively it must remain according to hedonistic views. It cannot be based on spiritual qualities or heightened by the attractions of immaterial beauty, or aspire to higher ends; nor can the loving parties meet in a sublimer and purer sphere, there to communicate in the enjoyment of a good divine. Nor is there any higher law that regulates love, or any superior bond that joins the lovers and gives their friendship firmness and indissolubility. They are united only by the gratifi-

cation which they afford to each other, a gratification which changes and vanishes as organic cravings vary and attractions fade away. Undoubtedly love of this kind is but an animal passion, devoid of any elevation, unsteady, and fluctuating.

Now make of this passion, not of the law that controls it, or of the higher end which it may subserve, but of the passion itself, an ideal; stamp on it, on account of the pleasure which it yields, the character of perfect morality; then, indeed, any gratification of it is essentially good, and increases in moral goodness in proportion to its pleasantness. There is then no longer an essential difference between free love and love in indissoluble wedlock, between the love of a Christian husband and wife and that of a pagan couple in ancient Rome or Athens; nay, as a pleasure-yielding passion the latter is decidedly to be preferred, not being, like the former, tempered by religious belief and motives and restrained by laws, but being strong, unbridled and uncontrolled. Impurity itself becomes fully justified. Impure no less than pure and moderate love yields its pleasures, conscious and intense. In the hedonistic theory there is no badness intrinsic to it; on the contrary, it is necessarily good as far as it is pleasant. The only reasons that may condemn it are its consequences for health and reputation. But as far as the present life goes, pains and injury to health may be obviated; and, besides, they are not more necessarily connected with unrestrained love than with the most praiseworthy labors and enterprises for science or for the public welfare. Disgrace will no longer attend impurity as

soon as love in its full extent is recognized as an ideal.

That impure love has in fact already gained this recognition, we may learn from the poetry which attempts to glorify the ideas of the new philosophy. In a recent romance of love, which is called the golden book of spirit and sense, the holy writ of beauty, we meet with heroes who make the most startling confessions. To them the ancient world is the object of the highest reverence and admiration, the naked Venus, the supreme beauty and attraction; purity, on the contrary, a malady brought by Christ, Christianity the death of true love and the fall of man. They openly admit that they have lost with faith in moral beauty the power of striving after it, nay, the very faculty of discerning between good and evil, insomuch that they feel but little perturbed by even the most abominable actions, and find nothing shocking in adultery and prostitution.[8]

It would, then, seem that love does not lead us up to the high peaks where, resting in eternal calm, reason discerns the bright ideal of the highest good, but leaves us in the rank and steaming valleys of sense. For what is so much bound down to sense as love? Particularly if pronounced an ideal, it is the most sensual and the rankest of all passions.

78. But does not the new morality propose at least one pure and genuine ideal—that of virtue? What objections can be made against it? None, indeed, if it is well understood. But what do the hedonists mean by virtue, and for what reasons have they

[8] Is Life Worth Living? pp. 110–116.

made an ideal of it? To this question J. S. Mill has given us a satisfactory answer.

"Life," says he, "would be a poor thing, very ill-provided with sources of happiness, if there were not this provision of nature, by which things originally indifferent, but conducive to, or otherwise associated with, the satisfaction of our primitive desires, become in themselves sources of pleasure, more valuable than the primitive pleasures, both in permanency, in the space of human existence that they are capable of covering, and even in intensity. Virtue, according to the utilitarian conception, is a good of this description. There was no original desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain. But through the association thus formed, it may be felt a good in itself, and desired as such, with as great intensity as any other good; and with this difference between it and the love of money, of power, or of fame, that all these may, and often do, render the individual noxious to the other members of the society to which he belongs, whereas there is nothing which makes him so much a blessing to them as the cultivation of virtue. And, consequently, the utilitarian standard, while it tolerates and approves those other acquired desires up to the point beyond which they would be more injurious to the general happiness than promotive of it, enjoins and requires the cultivation of the love of virtue to the greatest strength possible, as being above all things important to the general happiness." [9]

Herbert Spencer also, in criticising Aristotle's conception, comes to the conclusion that virtue consists in, and is desirable for, its conduciveness to pleasure.

"Unless," he says, "it is asserted that courage and chastity could still be thought of as virtues though productive of misery, it must be admitted that the conception of virtue cannot be separated from the conception of happiness-producing conduct; and that, as this holds of all the virtues, however otherwise unlike, it is from their conduciveness to happiness that they come to be classed as virtues." [10]

Though having very often but a remote relation to

[9] Utilitarianism, chap. iv. [10] Data of Ethics, p. 13.

happiness, still virtue is, in Mr. Spencer's theory, rendered directly and immediately pleasant. Let it but be practised, its practice, at least if long continued, will yield the pleasure of pursuit. Of this pleasure, as we have seen above,[11] the chief components are an aroused consciousness of personal efficiency, which, again, arouses the vague but massive consciousness of resulting gratifications, and the representation of the applause which the recognition of efficiency by others has brought before and will bring again. Since the two components increase in strength in proportion as the means are remote from final happiness, the use of the remotest means becomes, of itself, the most pleasurable immediate end. Clearly in the system both of J. S. Mill and of H. Spencer, it is mental association that, in the course of time, makes virtuous conduct pleasant, though originally unpleasant and undesirable. A charm accrues to virtue from its lasting association in thought with happiness as the ultimate end, as J. S. Mill thinks, or as Mr. Spencer tells us, from its constant association with gratifying results from personal efficiency, and with the applause of men foreseen and expected. The theory expounded may be regarded as an improvement on the ancient doctrine of the Greek sophists refuted by Plato. While these accounted for the agreeableness of virtue by the force of habit, the new philosophers still further account for the force of habit by mental association.

What virtue itself is, the hedonists do not take pains to explain to us at any length. Still, as they range under it the same actions and habits as Chris-

[11] Chap. iii.

tian philosophers do, calling it justice, fortitude, temperance, chastity, benevolence, we must take it for granted on their part that they mean by it a certain order of our actions involving the renunciation or moderation of pleasure in behalf of higher ends.

79. It will scarcely be necessary to remark that, by the theory expounded, virtue becomes a perversion of rational nature. Our faculties, guided by reason, primarily tend to the object represented in its goodness and perfection, and only secondarily to pleasure, as the result consequent on the possession of the object; but hedonism inverts the order, proposing pleasure as the first and principal end to be pursued. Is it befitting to convert a monstrosity into a moral ideal?

There are still other and much graver objections. Virtue, as an ideal, must be good and desirable of itself. This is agreed to, also, by J. S. Mill and H. Spencer; for, though they deny its original desirableness, they still endeavor to make it subsequently an immediate pleasurable end. But this attempt is a signal failure. In accordance with their views virtue is, by its nature, but a means conducive to happiness, or to gratifying results of conscious personal efficacy, and to the applause of others, and, since it implies a certain restraint on pleasure, a means immediately and of itself unpleasant and undesirable. All the goodness and desirableness that comes to it subsequently flows from the end to which it is referred. It is this alone that makes it desirable and gives its use moral worth. Yet goodness, so derived from the end, remains extrinsic to the means, may the connection between the two be ever so close, and their

association in mental representation be ever so regular. The nature of the means is thereby not changed: its disagreeableness is mitigated but not altogether taken off: it has become useful, but remains, of itself, more or less unpleasant, so much so that, could the end be attained in another more delightful way, it would at once be discarded. Let the poor, starving working-man ever so constantly imagine to himself that his hard labor will manifest his personal efficiency, and gain for him the applause of his companions, or that a day of social revolution will come and reward his toils, he will not, therefore, find pleasure in his miseries and hardships, and feel as happy as his wealthy employer. Let the sick man ever so long entertain the hope of recovering his health by an operation, the scalpel of the surgeon nevertheless causes him intense pain. Could mental association divest our ills and privations of their painfulness and convert them into pleasures, distress and affliction would long ago have disappeared from earth. Virtue, then, being, as a restriction of pleasure, essentially evil, will always be devoid of intrinsic goodness, and will never become an object desirable of itself. Accordingly it can never be a moral ideal.

We must go yet further. Virtue has in hedonistic morality no place, no tangible reality whatever. It is not enough to say that, according to hedonistic views, it must vary with time and circumstances and with the different stages of evolution, and must consequently become unknowable, as happiness itself is and as all the means leading to it must be. Virtue in its proper conception must, to any hedonist, be an absurdity. For as understood thus far it is an order

superior to pleasure, obeying which we renounce many enjoyments as absolutely bad, and sacrifice others which are lawful for higher purposes, undergo labors and hardships without any temporal reward, and cast off what is most dear to us on earth, having in view goods of a sublimer nature and of lasting duration. But to the hedonist, as to the Epicurean, there is nothing above pleasure. The greatest possible amount of it is man's supreme and ultimate end, to which everything is subordinate. Beneath this highest end there is but one order of right conduct conceivable, which is the carrying out of the rule that, to enjoy ourselves as much as possible, we should avoid excesses attended by painful consequences, and prefer the longer-lasting to the shorter, the more refined to the grosser, the more general to the personal pleasure. The hedonists may term the observance of this order virtue, regarding forethought and caution in enjoyments as its nature. But this is not virtue as defined by the greatest philosophers and as conceived by mankind at large. Chastity is not lust cautiously gratified, nor are meekness and patience guarded anger and revenge, nor is benevolence restricted selfishness, nor is justice theft and oppression not reached by law. Virtue is the perfect conquest of lust and anger and selfishness and covetousness; it is the spiritual and transcendent element that gives all our actions imperishable worth and pure excellence, elevating them far above this world of material phenomena, in the same way as the eternal ideal of the beautiful ennobles the wonderful works of art. It is not for their moderate enjoyments, but for their untarnished purity, their unshaken honesty and upright-

ness under all, even the most trying circumstances, their heroic forgetfulness of self, their self-sacrificing charity, their elevation above the senses and aspiration to the highest ends, that we admire and praise in those who are considered to be virtuous. Hence we also understand that virtue does not, as the utilitarians think, consist in preferring the universal to the special gratifications. The virtuous man does not procure for his neighbor pleasures which he for himself avoids as immoral and mean; and public well-being like private happiness does not consist in enjoyment as such, but in the rule of heaven-born reason.

Hedonism is the death-blow to virtue, and not only to virtue, but to all other ideals; as approaching winter kills the flowering beauty and verdure of nature, so does this new morality put an end to everything that is supra-sensuous, sublime and noble, at the very moment that it pretends to build up supreme perfection. Whilst it holds out truth, beauty, love, virtue as the sources of the purest happiness, it dries up these very sources: extinguishing the light of immaterial reason, destroying the true and the beautiful, degrading love to the meanest passion and virtue to the lasting and universal gratification of organic desires and cravings. This result is not astonishing, after the moral good in general has been effaced and obliterated, but it is of most baneful consequences, considering the influence which acknowledged ideals exercise on human conduct.

80. It must be evident to every unprejudiced mind that the ideals of Christian ethics are of an altogether different nature. A few reflections will show that they

are of that eminent rank of which their very conception requires them to be. Christian philosophy knows the eternal and supreme original from which they have to be copied—the Deity. God is both our first cause and our ultimate end. As the first cause He is the fullness of being, Supreme Reason, life infinitely perfect, and as such He is the archetype of every rational nature. Having proceeded from Him after His own likeness, we must, to return to Him as our last end, complete the similarity with Him by observing in our free actions the right order conceived by His wisdom and eternally embraced by His will. For as we are His likenesses in being, so we must be also His likenesses in rational activity. And it is quite plain that thus being made perfectly conformable to Him, we are duly prepared for His final possession, which, consisting in perfect contemplation and love, resembles His own essential happiness. Hence it is that God's holiness must be regarded as the supreme model of moral goodness; for His holiness is nothing else than the right order as eternally willed and embraced by Him. As such He has proposed Himself also in revelation. "Be ye holy because I am holy." [12]

81. Our tending to God, then, being conformity with Him, the moral ideal consists in the most perfect resemblance with Divine Holiness. But again, what is it that constitutes this divine resemblance? Virtue, the habit of acting morally. We said above that morality is the reign of reason in our actions, the conformity of our conduct with the principles of reason, or with the order conceived by it

[12] Levit. xi. 44.

from the nature of rational creation. We further remarked that, as our reason is the likeness of Divine Reason, so also the order drawn up by it has first and originally been conceived from all eternity by God; and from this we have inferred that moral goodness is resemblance with Him.

However, the control of reason may be actual or habitual, transient or permanent, according as it is exercised only in particular acts, or is firmly established in us and prevailing throughout our conduct. As God is essentially holiness itself, always actual and absolutely unchangeable, clearly we cannot resemble Him in this essential attribute of His, unless we are habitually determined to observe the right order of reason. This determination constitutes the habit of virtue, it being the property of a habit to dispose a faculty otherwise indeterminate to follow easily and readily a certain line of action, and the property of a virtuous habit so to dispose and to determine us as to make us obey reason readily and constantly. On this account virtue has been defined by St. Augustine as a spiritual quality by which we live right and which we cannot abuse to do wrong, and by Aristotle [13] and St. Thomas [14] as a habit which renders good both the act and the doer.

82. It is scarcely necessary to remark that, as Divine Holiness resides in the Divine Will, so virtue, also, which is its perfect resemblance, must be seated in the created will; and it is likewise evident that the definition just given refers it primarily to this faculty. No other habits than those of the will,

[13] Ethics, book ii., chap. vi., 2.
[14] Sum. Theol., i.-ii., qu. 56, art. 3.

however perfect they be, can render both ourselves and our operations good. The intellectual habits facilitate, but do not necessitate, perfect intellection; for the understanding, being subject to the influence of the will, may or may not act in accordance with them, and consequently, though perfected by them, may or may not act perfectly. Necessitating force must, for the same reason, be denied also of habits residing in the lower faculties. Only when the will, which holds sway over all our powers, is determined by a good habit, and hence disposed easily and readily to carry out the order of reason, is our operation constantly and uniformly right. Moreover, the will alone pursues the end of the entire human nature. Its habits, therefore, if good, prompt us to act correctly towards the end of man, the ultimate goal. All other faculties pursue only their own particular good, and accordingly their habits incline us to act correctly towards particular ends. It is, then, the right determination of the will alone that renders our acts good, and it is habits of the will that render them constantly and steadily good. They render ourselves also good, because they give us the right direction to our last end. Nor does the will tend to the supreme end only by its own acts. Having control over the other faculties, it directs all our actions. If, therefore, the will is perfected and determined by good habits, all our powers and our whole activity will constantly tend to the supreme good. Quite legitimate, then, is the conclusion drawn by St. Thomas that, while the habits of other faculties render man good only in some respect, the habits inclining the will to moral

action render him altogether good and perfect, and that, consequently, only in these latter habits the definition of virtue is verified.[15]

Still, for the entirety of virtue, subordinate habits of other faculties are also required. For, though the will be habitually determined to embrace the moral order and to conform all our activity to the same, it will fail to do so, if the intellect and the lower appetite are not habituated to do right under its control. In its perfection, therefore, virtue is made up of the effectual determination of the will to do good, and of the permanent disposition of the other faculties readily to submit to its command. So Plato described the virtuous man, when he said that the inner man within him, the rational part of his nature, is the strongest, while he watches with a husbandman's care over the many-headed beasts of appetite, rearing and training the creature's tame heads and not letting the wild ones grow, having made an ally of the lion, the irascible part of his nature, and caring for all the parts in common by making them friends to one another and to himself.[16]

To sum up the thoughts developed, virtue is the steady subordination of all other powers to the highest final tendency in us, to the rational will, and the steady subordination of the will to the supreme good and ultimate end, that is, to God; it is the right order lastingly established primarily in our will, and through it in all our faculties and actions, the likeness of the Divine Holiness permanently expressed in us. Every particular virtue in some respect realizes this sublime order,

[15] Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 56, art. 3. [16] Republic, ix., chap. 12.

and all the virtues together complete it and bring it into being in its fullest splendor and perfection.

83. Such is the moral ideal proposed by Christian ethics; the highest, indeed, we can conceive, yet one which exists not in thought alone, but has been carried into reality wherever the true personal God was known. How many men and women in the course of ages occur to us intent on serving their Creator and God during all their life, and tending to Him with the sacrifice of all earthly things,—just, meek, patient, chaste, and humble, and yet strong, courageous, and constant, and while longing for their own true and lasting happiness, devoting themselves with tender love to their neighbors' welfare, assisting them in their needs and enlightening them with higher wisdom.

Even where they are no longer consciously recognized, the ideals of Christian ethics still exercise a powerful influence—we mean to say on the professors of the hedonistic doctrine. Far be it from us to charge them all with epicurean voluptuousness. We gladly recognize in many of them high-minded sentiments and noble deeds. But these attributes are not to be traced to the influence of moral theories, which, with logical necessity, lead to the very opposite. Their real cause lies somewhere else. After mankind has been for centuries ennobled by Christian civilization, the ideas of Christian morality are not and cannot be at once obliterated; they are in too full a harmony with rational nature, and exercise on it too powerful an attraction. They yet remain, though not acknowledged, in the minds of even those who profess to have renounced theism or Christianity, and,

revealing eternal truths, rouse their wills to aspire to the imperishable goods above the material world. Thus the better qualities of recent hedonists condemn the theories which they support with their talents and their learning, and evidence the truth of the ethics which they have made the object of their fierce attacks.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MORAL ORDER AS A DIVINE LAW.

84. The moral order is universally considered as a law binding on all men.
85. Christian philosophers, upholding human freedom, place obligation, not in compulsion, but in a rational restraint arising from the necessary connection of ends and means.
86. They, therefore, quite consistently regard the moral order as obligatory; for it is necessarily connected with the ultimate and most necessary of all ends.
87. And they justly regard it as a divine law in the strict sense.
88. The law, rendering the moral order obligatory, was conceived and sanctioned by God from all eternity, not freely, but necessarily.
89. Though enacted from eternity, this law is promulgated in time by the very creation of human reason, and is, therefore, called also the natural law.
90. The precepts of the moral law divinely sanctioned and manifested through rational nature coincide with the self-evident principles of practical reason and the necessary conclusions drawn from them.
91. Applied by the individual to his own personal conduct, these precepts become the dictates of conscience.
92. The moral law sanctioned by God and proclaimed by reason is absolutely necessary and universally known.
93. It is supreme.
94. And is supported by sanction not only in this life, but chiefly in the life to come.
95. The rewards and punishments constituting its sanction in the future life are the highest possible and are eternal.
96. Not only the Christian, but also the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome regard the moral law as divinely enacted.

84. It might well seem that the important questions of good and evil could admit of no further discussion. We have treated at such length their nature and essential difference, their universal knowableness and their respective worth and baseness, as to have put the patience of the reader to a severe test. There is, however, one feature more which demands our attention. Considering right and wrong like two opposite poles, we find ourselves not only attracted or repelled, but strictly bound in conscience to embrace the one and to avoid the other. So peremptorily do we feel this necessity that we can never rid ourselves of it. We can do what we know to be morally evil, for we are under no compulsion; but in doing it we feel the weight of obligation more heavy. If we were to act merely in contravention to some physical or mathematical truth: if we were obstinately to maintain that bodies are not heavy, or that two and two are not four, and to act on such false belief: we should be charged with folly or stupidity. But, if we willfully run counter to a moral principle, we are guilty of sin. Nor do others only so judge of us; our own conscience bitterly reproaches and condemns us, and the condemnation is accompanied by the threat of inevitable penalties.

All men regard the moral order as a law absolutely binding, superior to any earthly power, to be avenged if violated, to be followed by happiness if observed. This firm and unshaken conviction we find among all men whose rational nature has not been vitiated, in whatever condition they may live, whatever education they may have enjoyed, whatever their religious views may be, in all countries, whether civilized or

not, in all ages, in the remotest antiquity, as well as in our own days of superior mental culture. Well has Cicero, with his wonted eloquence, described the moral order as the absolute law.

"There is a true law, right reason, conformable to nature, universal, unchangeable, eternal, whose commands urge us to duty, and whose prohibitions restrain us from evil, though, whether it enjoins or forbids, the good heed it, and the wicked disregard it. This law cannot be contradicted by any other law, and is not liable either to derogation or abrogation. Neither the senate nor the people can give us any dispensation from obeying this universal law. It needs no other expositor and interpreter than our own conscience. It is not one thing at Rome and another at Athens, one thing to-day and another to-morrow; but at all times and in all nations it must forever reign, eternal and imperishable. It is the sovereign master and ruler of all. God is its author, promulgator and enforcer. He who does not obey it, flies from himself and does violence to the very nature of man, and, by so doing, will endure the severest penalties, even if he avoid other evils, which are usually accounted punishments."[1]

If men of science have devoted their talents and untiring zeal to the discovery of the laws of the material universe, it would seem that the nature and the origin of the moral law, regulating the actions of rational creation, should be studied by the moralist with still greater care and attention. For this is undoubtedly a subject belonging to a much higher sphere. A new question thus presents itself, to which a definite answer must be given by every ethical theory. For the sake of clearness, we must here invert the order thus far followed in our discussions, and first hear the Christian philosophers about the obligation and the sanction of the moral law. The exposition of their doctrine will enable us

[1] De Republica, lib. iii. c. 22.

more fully to understand the import of the new theories.

85. Is it at all possible for Christian ethics, consistently with its fundamental tenets, to admit a strictly obligatory law for man? Freedom of the will is most vigorously defended by every Christian moralist. But obligation, which is the formal constituent of law, involves a necessity imposed on the will, a restriction of its freedom. Are there not, therefore, in the Christian view two contradictory teachings to be reconciled? Such an inextricable difficulty would, in fact, beset the moralist, if obligation were conceived as a physical necessity; for, when physically necessitated, the agent is either compelled from without, or irresistibly impelled from within, to certain actions, so as not to have the possibility of acting otherwise. Obligation, however, is necessity of a different kind, which is called moral, and consists in the alternative in which the rational agent is either to renounce a certain end apprehended as necessary, or to use the means requisite for its attainment. To him, for instance, for whom the knowledge of law is indispensable, study is necessary, in so much, that if he refuses to apply himself to it, he must renounce the learning understood to be needful. Whosoever regards the preservation of his life as necessary, must take food or else succumb to death. Obligation is, according to Christian ethics, a necessity of this kind, and has therefore been defined as a rational restraint, arising from the necessary connection of means with a necessary end. Such necessity involves no compulsion and is perfectly consistent with freedom of will. For, whenever the

end is represented by the intellect as necessary, yet difficult to attain, and, therefore, accompanied in its pursuit with evil; or whenever it is apprehended as real and necessary, yet not with compelling evidence: the will remains free to desire or not desire it, and, consequently, to employ or not to employ the means necessary for its attainment.

86. This explanation premised, the moral order is easily understood to be of supreme, absolute and divine obligation. It becomes such by its necessary connection with the ultimate end. Is not this end of all the most necessary? Rational nature must be referred to it according to the right natural order. The Creator cannot but destine man for it; we, ourselves, have in our faculties an innate tendency towards it, and cannot but desire it, inasmuch as we necessarily long for happiness as our ultimate perfection and final rest. The connection, too, between the observance of the moral order and our last end is absolutely necessary. It is based on the very nature of things. For, whilst wickedness is of itself opposed to our ultimate end, virtuous actions are the only way leading to its attainment. And this inherent necessity is sealed by the Divine Will. God, who is holiness itself, having destined rational creation for Himself as its last end, necessarily must will and decree that man should tend to Him and possess Him not otherwise than by moral actions. Hence, the absolutely unchangeable alternative results for us, either to forfeit our end and final happiness, or to act morally, either to renounce our supreme good, or to conform our conduct to right reason. No other obligation is

so stringent, so absolute, so evidently divine. Its every element is of absolute necessity: the end and the connection of the means with it, the nature of things, the will of the Deity, the dictate of reason, and the innate longing of the will for felicity.

87. This obligation, if further analyzed, will be seen to give the moral order the perfect nature of a law, though not of a human, or temporary, or arbitrary, but of a divine, eternal, and necessary law. St. Thomas has defined law in general as an ordinance of reason for the common good promulgated by him who has charge of the whole community.[2] The definition has been accepted by the schools, and there is no ground on which it could be rejected in our age. The moral order, made obligatory, as set forth above, evidently falls within it. The whole rational creation forms a community, the largest of all that exist. For all beings endowed with reason have in common the same ultimate end and supreme good, which they pursue with mutual dependence on one another, and, if reached, enjoy with common happiness. The King of this community is God, the Creator. Being wisdom itself, He from all eternity conceives the order in which, in accordance with His own nature and that of created intelligences, the ultimate end must be strived for; and, being holiness itself, He cannot but will that this same order, essentially right, should always be observed, and that its transgression should entail the forfeiture of the supreme good.

What else is this eternal conception and behest than a rule or order of action drawn up by the reason and decreed by the will of the Supreme Ruler for the

[2] Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 90, art. 4.

good of rational creation? And what else, therefore, is the moral order so decreed than a law enacted by God Himself from eternity—not freely, but necessarily in consequence of His infinite wisdom and holiness?

88. Let us enter yet deeper into the divine thoughts. As God resolved to create this wide universe with the fullest freedom, out of love for His own infinite perfections—for loving them He diffused and communicated them outside of Himself—so He also destined all created things to promote His glory. This destination He cannot alter, nor permit it to be frustrated. Holy as it is, it will be achieved if all creatures manifest His perfections as the work shows the skill of its author, and the likeness the beauty of the original, and if, moreover, those which are rational know and praise and love Him thus manifested. The ability so to manifest, to know, and to love Him is implied in the nature of finite rational beings, and the reducing of it into act constitutes their own ultimate perfection and formal happiness.

His glory being the ultimate end of creation, He must, in accordance with His wisdom and holiness, not only provide His creatures with all the means necessary for its attainment, but also impress a direction towards it on their natural faculties. For he who reasonably wills an end, wills also the means necessary to reach it; and he who destines a thing for a certain purpose, directs it to the same. The archer communicates motion to the arrow towards the intended goal; and so, likewise, God gives to the nature which He created for His glory, an innate impulse to achieve it by congenial activity.

Such ordering and directing of all beings is, no less than their creation, an object of God's eternal thought. As He, in His infinite wisdom, from all eternity conceived the great idea according to which He was to shape this universe, with all its parts and realms, material and spiritual, so He designed also the general order, according to which He was to govern the worlds created, and to adjust and move them to their destination.[3] This latter order, rational creation supposed, is not arbitrary or changeable, but necessary; for it corresponds, on the one hand, to the nature of the ultimate end; on the other, to the nature of the creatures destined for the same: and it, therefore, results from the essence of created and uncreated being. Were it not such, it would not be apprehended as right by the Divine Intellect.

For the same reason of its harmony with the nature of things, this design of universal order implies different directions to be implanted in different creatures. While irrational creation is made only to manifest God, the world of intelligences is destined to know and love Him. And while the former acts only of necessity, and not self-determined, the latter is endowed with free and self-determined activity; whence it follows that the one cannot but reach its end, whereas the other may, by the abuse of freedom, miss its destination. The eternal design of the world's government, on this account, provides irrational beings with well-regulated impulses and tendencies, physically necessitating them to certain lines of action; and, for rational man, an innate direction of activity towards the ultimate end con-

[3] Sum. Theol., i.-ii., qu. 93, art. 1, 4, 5, 6.

sistent with freedom. Moreover, as, through free-will, man may sinfully refuse to honor God by knowledge and love, a restoration of the right order and of the divine glory, in spite of the created will, must be provided. The provision cannot but consist in ordaining that the guilty pay the just penalty of their revolt, and thus, at least, manifest the divine justice. Thus rational nature, as well as the glory of the Creator, which is never to be foiled, requires for man such a direction of his activity towards his ultimate end as will coincide with obligation or moral necessity.

Is not the design of the divine government, so conceived and decreed, an eternal law existing in the mind and will of the Supreme Lawgiver? Is it not a rule enjoined from eternity by the Supreme Reason as an obligation on rational creation for the welfare of all? Is it not the right order made obligatory on all by God for the good of the whole universe? So the Christian philosophers of all ages have looked upon it. They all agree in regarding the moral order as a law, not originating on earth, but emanating before creation from the Divine Mind and the Divine Will, and therefore call it the eternal law. To convince ourselves, we need but pay attention to the meaning which they attribute to this term.

"The eternal law," says St. Thomas, "is the Divine Wisdom directing all actions and movements."[4] Long before him St. Augustine had defined it "The Supreme Reason, which is always to be obeyed,"[5] "the reason and the will of God commanding the observance and forbidding the violation of the right order."[6]

[4] Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 93, art. 1, 4, 5, 6. [5] De Libero Arbitrio, i., c. 6. 15. [6] Contra Faustum, xxii., 27.

89. Still the moral order, though thus sanctioned by God, might seem to lack one attribute necessary to make it an eternal law. Every law, as may be understood from the definition given above, must be promulgated by the ruler to the members of the community. How could it, if unknown, direct their operations or bind their wills? But it cannot be promulgated to man from eternity, since creation exists only in time. This merely proves that the moral order is as a law eternal in one respect, and temporal in another. As conceived by the Divine Mind and as made obligatory by the Omnipotent Will, in which purpose and execution are one and the self-same act, it is eternal, but as made known to man it is temporal as all creation is.

That in reality it has been promulgated it is needless to prove, since we know it to have been enacted by God for man in the manner described. Yet it might be asked when and by what act the promulgation took place. I answer, at the very beginning of human existence and by the very act of creation. As the nature of every thing is made for God's glory, the direction to this end must be intrinsic to it, and must, consequently, have been given it by the same act by which the thing itself was produced. For this reason the eternal law as communicated to creation is called a natural law, that is, a law identified with nature. No long explanation is necessary to set forth how all nature is stamped with the impress of the Divine Will.

We find in irrational creation, in each and all of its parts, active and passive powers so joined and tempered, so inclined and determined, that through-

out they are necessitated to certain combinations, to certain lines of actions, to a certain course of development and a certain uniformity of regulated activity. Such tendencies and determinations, inherent in the constitutions of things, are the laws of nature; physical laws, however, as they affect matter and involve irresistible necessity. Being implanted in the very nature of material and organic beings, they are undoubtedly the work of the Creator; nay, manifesting the greatness and the wisdom of the Maker of the universe, while they render subservient to man all that is inferior to him, they are evidently an emanation of the Divine Mind and the Divine Will leading by the eternal law all creation to its ultimate end.[7]

Quite differently is the eternal law impressed on man. In accordance with his nature it provides him with inclinations and directions which are consistent with freedom of will, and which, consequently, have the character of moral obligation and as such are intellectually apprehended. It is, therefore, also as applied and communicated to the rational creature a real law in the strict and proper sense. But how does it come to be in us by the very act of creation? Human reason is the likeness, the finite participation, of the infinite Reason. Hence, the human mind is, like the Divine, naturally able to perceive the ultimate end, the right order of our actions in relation to it, though the one, being infinite, perceives these truths with supreme perfection, the other, being finite, but imperfectly. And, as a further consequence, reason is in us, as in God, a law—nay, the same law; in God the original law, in us its copy and temporal promulga-

[7] Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 93, art. 4, 5.

tion. But reason is the chief constituent of our nature: therefore it is a natural law communicated to us by creation itself.

This is the view of St. Thomas, developed by him with his wonted clearness and exactness:

"Since all things subject to Divine Providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law, it is manifest that they all participate to some extent in it, inasmuch as by the stamp of that law on them they have their inclination to their several acts and ends. But among the rest the rational creature is subject to Divine Providence in a more excellent way, being itself a partaker of Providence, providing for itself and others. Hence there is in it a participation of the eternal law, whereby it has a natural inclination to a due act and end: and such a participation in the eternal law in the rational creature is called natural law."[8]

The natural law is, as he says, a law in the strict and proper sense: "for the rational creature participates in the eternal law intellectually and rationally, which the irrational creature does not."

How it is that human reason is a participation of the eternal law, he explains by saying that the light of natural reason, by which we know what is good and what is bad, is nothing else than a communication of the Divine Light, and that "all knowledge is an irradiation and participation of the eternal law which is the immutable truth."[9] Hence he infers that there is a natural law in the rational creature, a law identified with rational nature, and that it is to be defined as the participation of the eternal law, or as the light of reason given us in creation, by which we know what is good and what is evil, what we have to do and what to avoid.[10]

[8] Sum. Theol., i.–ii., qu. 91, art. 2. [9] Ibid., qu. 93, art. 2.
[10] Ibid., qu. 91, art. 2.

90. It remains yet to show how special laws of conduct issue from reason. As was said above, it is peculiar to the human mind first to gain by its ideas some insight into the nature of things, hence, to form universal judgments, and from them as from self-evident principles to deduce conclusions: first such as are obvious by plain and simple reasoning, then others that are more recondite by long and intricate argumentation. In like manner, our natural duties and obligations are manifested. At the beginning we know by our understanding what we ought to do in the light of universal principles, then by reasoning from the latter we arrive at more determinate moral rules; first at such as follow directly and with compelling necessity, later also at such as are deduced with more difficulty and produce less strong conviction. As rules of the first kind may be designated the duties of worshipping God, of obeying parents and superiors, of respecting others' life, property and reputation, of loving those closely connected with us, of observing chastity and temperance; as rules of the second kind, the duty of loving enemies, of pardoning offences, the unity and indissolubility of matrimony.

The rules and laws thus known we apply, if not always by explicit, at least by implicit reasoning to our conduct in individual cases, and by so doing, we judge what, in particular circumstances, we are allowed or obliged, and what we are forbidden to do.

91. This latter kind of judgments, by which the general rule is applied to personal conduct, is termed conscience, which is, therefore, defined as the judgment of each individual concerning the morality of his own conduct, testifying, accusing or excusing actions

already done or omitted, restraining or prompting as to actions contemplated. The different general rules or principles, whether self-evident or inferred, are ramifications of the one universal law of reason, from which they emanate with necessity. Being the source and origin of all particular moral judgments, they constitute the entire general direction actually given us by rational nature. They are, therefore, appropriately called particular laws, laws forming a well-connected system, all derived from one supreme principle, those which are more general determined by those which are more special, some perfect and complete, others yet incomplete and needing further determination.

Nor have these laws only human force as emanating from our own reason; they are all manifested as divinely binding on our will; for they are all clearly and certainly known as rules of conduct absolutely necessary, so much so that they cannot by right be disobeyed under any circumstances, or be abolished by any human power, or transgressed without the gravest consequences. Such necessity is obviously not established by our own will, but by an authority above us; nor by any creature or finite cause, but, because it is universal and is the right rational order, by the Maker and Lord of all, by the Supreme and Absolute Reason. The divine character of the obligation intrinsic to moral laws is at first apprehended but obscurely and imperfectly, yet it appears clearer and more distinct in proportion as the human mind develops. Man is naturally enabled by the light of reason to know God as the Creator of the universe and the supreme Lord and Lawgiver, as infinitely

holy, wise, and just, and hence as the avenger of evil and rewarder of good. As such, all nations have known the Deity, however deformed by errors their religious ideas were. Though but little cultured, man also knows full well that his own reason, limited and imperfect as it is, is not the supreme law, but is subject to the Creator and voices the Divine Mind.

The moral order being thus established as a divine law, good and evil appear in a new light, and are clothed with a new attribute. Moral goodness, or morality, is not merely conformity with reason, it is also conformity with the Divine Will, obedience to the supreme law; and moral badness is not merely opposition to right reason, but, at the same time, disobedience to God. The worth and excellence of the former is thus heightened and completed, the malice and baseness of the latter immensely increased; the former becomes due and voluntary submission to the Most High, the latter, sinful and rebellious offence of God's supreme majesty.

92. A few words remain to be added concerning the attributes which the moral order must of necessity have, if conceived as a divine and natural law. It will easily be understood to be, as such, absolutely necessary, unchangeable, supreme, sanctioned by the highest rewards for its observance, and the severest punishments for its violation.

That the moral order, the matter enjoined on us by the eternal law, is in itself necessary, we need no further proof. Nor can there be any doubt as to the necessity of its obligation. As the will of God, being infinitely holy, cannot but love and embrace the right

order, so it cannot but command it to be observed by the rational creature; and as God cannot but will His glory as the ultimate end of man, so He cannot but incline and direct human nature towards it. In this regard the will of God, creation being supposed, is not free, however free it was with regard to the act of creation.

Of the same necessity is also the promulgation of the eternal law. The law necessarily willed is also necessarily promulgated. The promulgation is identical with human reason itself. But reason is intrinsic to all and the same in all. And so, likewise, are the practical principles of reason, and the conclusions deduced from them with certainty, always the same, and always manifested as absolutely necessary.

Being thus in every respect necessary, the moral law is the same at all times and in all places, not one in Athens, and another in Rome, as Cicero said; one in the old, and another in the new world, one in antiquity and another in our age. It may happen that actions change to which the law is applied, but the law itself remains immutable, just as the human law remaining the same, admits of different interpretations and applications.[11]

The universal knowableness of the divine law of morality is a consequence of its necessity. Reason itself being its promulgation, it is evidently promulgated to all without exception; nay, is actually or habitually known to all whose minds are to some extent developed. For reason no sooner commences

[11] Sum. Theol., i.-ii., qu. 94, art. 5; Th. Meyer, Institut. Jur. Nat., pp. 232, 235.

its congenial activity, than it begins to know the first principles and to deduce conclusions from them. Nor can these principles, or the conclusions drawn from them, ever vary among men, since their perception, free from error, issues necessarily from rational nature, the degree only of the clearness and distinction with which they are perceived being different. Not only, therefore, is the moral law in itself one and the self-same for all, as the sun which illumines this material universe is everywhere the same, but also its true and certain knowledge is the same in all whose reason is not spoiled or vitiated, just as the perception of the sunlight is the same in all endowed with the sense of sight. This, however, holds true only of the cognition of the self-evident principles and the conclusions obviously contained in them; any further assertion is not warranted by the proofs advanced. For deductions from them which are less evident and require intricate reasoning, are neither drawn by all, the understanding not being in all equally developed, nor drawn unerringly, the human mind being in such cases liable to be biased by passions, prejudices, and vices. Hence result diversity of opinions, doubts, ignorance, and errors in so many points of the moral doctrine among those not enlightened by Christian revelation.[12]

93. The moral law, divinely sanctioned and manifested by reason, we further said, is supreme. It is such in many respects. Its author is supreme, wherefore no power can prevail against it. It is in itself superior to any other law. The order it prescribes is

[12] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.-ii., qu. 93, art. 2; qu. 94, art. 4.

required by the nature of things, and is sanctioned by God, not freely, but necessarily, while any other enactment, even if divine, emanates from free will. The natural law, consequently, cannot be abolished by any other law whatever. On the contrary, it is presupposed by all others as their foundation. No lawgiver can ever exact obedience to his decrees, except on the ground that right reason acknowledges his authority, and commands submission to it. This holds good in a special manner of the human lawgiver, who by nature is not above those whom he is to rule by his enactments. For the binding force of every law consists in moral obligation, and this, resting on the necessary connection of our acts with our end, originates in God, to whom alone it belongs to determine the conditions under which the ultimate end, that is, He Himself, is to be attained and to be possessed. Every lawgiver, therefore, must be invested with power derived from God, either in the order of creation and Divine Providence, or by a supernatural intervention, and must, by exhibiting power so derived, show that he can lay others under obligation and that obedience is due to him according to the dictate of reason.

Moreover, without conformity to the natural law no positive law is conceivable. According to its very definition, law must establish a reasonable order in behalf of the common weal. But that order alone can be called reasonable which harmonizes with the principles of practical reason, which we have shown to be identical with the natural law. Such conformity will be found in positive enactments, if they are either necessary consequences of the natural law, or

determinations added to such rules and principles of it as are of themselves not sufficiently defined.[13]

94. Lastly, the moral law is sanctioned by the highest rewards for its observance, and the severest punishments for its transgression. Sanction by reward and punishment attends every law for a twofold purpose; first to induce the members of the community to faithful obedience; secondly, to keep up the right order by retribution for merits and demerits. To reach the one purpose it must be sufficient to deter all from transgressions; to reach the other, it must be perfect or just. If state laws ought not to be infringed with impunity, and if they are else regarded as futile; undoubtedly the natural law, too, which concerns the most universal, the most necessary and most important order, must be supported by perfect and sufficient sanction.

Rewards and punishments attend the moral law already during this life. Conscience, which is the voice of the Divine Judge, deals out retribution by bestowing approbation on virtue, and by visiting wickedness with the bitterest remorse. Moreover, the observance of the right order of reason is naturally attended with many beneficial consequences: with the healthy condition of the mind and the body, with success in enterprises, with peace and social content, with honor and esteem; and *vice versâ* its disturbance is apt to entail on the wrong-doer penalties, such as sickness, failure, and disgrace. However, rewards and punishments of this kind are neither certain nor unavoidable, nor general, because

[13] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., ibid., qu. 95, art. 2; Th. Meyer, Institutiones J. N., pp. 245, 248.

they can be prevented (particularly when vice has become powerful, wily, and widespread, or has succeeded in stifling conscience by repeated transgressions), nor are they, short-lived and uncertain as they are, proportionate to the worth of virtue and to the iniquity of sin. Who will ever maintain that the vices of the rich and the mighty, and the honesty and patience practiced by the poor and the middle classes, meet with their just retribution during this mortal life? Hence, this temporal sanction on earth affords no sufficient motive for always doing right and avoiding wrong, by counterbalancing the incitements to sin and the hardships of virtue.

There must, then, be another sanction beyond the grave, perfect and sufficient. That in fact there is one, we know from the nature of the obligation proper to the eternal or natural law. This obligation, as explained above, is the alternative in which the rational creature is placed either to observe the right order, or to forfeit its final happiness, owing to the necessary connection between morality and the ultimate end. As, therefore, the attainment of happiness must be consequent on the observance of the moral law as its proper reward, so must the loss of happiness correspond to its transgression as the due punishment. It thus becomes a logical necessity either to deny the obligation of the moral law, or to conceive of the enjoyment or the bereavement of final happiness as its sanction; for the two are essentially connected both in conception and in reality.

95. The reward and punishment spoken of are of the highest order; for they are the gain or loss of the supreme good, and the gain or loss of it, not tem-

poral, but eternal. Happiness, as was shown in preceding chapters, is eternal of its nature. Hence, its enjoyment is necessarily endless, unchangeable, and inamissible. Such must be also its loss. In strictness, the eternal good can be gained or lost only forever. Its loss is just as little a temporary delay of its possession, as its gain is an enjoyment limited in duration. If the loss is necessary, it is also certain, unchangeable and irreparable. But the loss of happiness is necessary, because there is between moral conduct and happiness a necessary connection; and therefore happiness is as necessarily lost by immorality as it is necessarily gained by morality. Endlessness, unchangeableness and impossibility of amission or reparation constitute eternity.

The sanction of the moral law by eternal reward and punishment is both perfect and sufficient. It is just and perfect, because by it man reaps the natural results of his actions, attaining the ultimate end after he had duly pursued it, or forfeiting the same after he had refused to tend to it; being forever united with God, the supreme good, after he proved his love and obedience to Him, or forever separated from Him after he had turned away from Him by grievous offence and disobedience. The justice of such sanction cannot be called into question for the reason that merit and demerit are temporal, and reward and punishment are eternal. Retribution is, in general, dealt out in proportion, not to the duration, but to the moral character of the action. And, what deserves still more to be taken into consideration, if our end is by its nature eternal, and the preparation for it is necessarily limited, it becomes a necessity that time

and eternity, however unequal in length, correspond to each other.

Eternal sanction is sufficient for all without exception and under all circumstances. For it offers a motive which prompts us to the observance of the moral law also at the cost of the greatest sacrifices and of life itself, even when exposed to the most difficult trials, and tempted to sin by the most dangerous incitements; a motive which is equally strong for the child and for the adult, for the uncivilized and the civilized, for those who are elevated in rank and blessed by fortune, and those who struggle with misery and privations, for those accustomed to the practice of virtue and those habituated in vice.[14]

By the principles thus far developed, Christian philosophy fully explains our consciousness of being subject to a higher and necessary law regulating our conduct, the universality and firmness of the conviction with which certain moral rules have been acknowledged as binding in all ages, the sternness of the obligation which is thought to be intrinsic to them, the keenness of perception with which conscience judges our actions, condemning or approving them, the rewards which virtue always has confidently expected, and the punishments which vice has always dreaded. All these facts find their interpretation in the one great truth, that the right order of free actions, on which depend the well-being of the individual, the welfare of society, the happiness of all rational creation, rests on the Deity as its eternal and unchangeable foundation.

[14] St. Thomas, S. c. gent., lib. iii., c. 144; Th. Meyer, Institut. J. N., pp. 214, 223.

96. Nor does Christian philosophy alone so look upon the moral law. Ever since the dawning of philosophy the most enlightened men have entertained the same views. That this law emanated from the Supreme Reason was taught already by Zeno, Cleanthes, Heraclitus, Plato, Seneca.[15]

Cicero sums up the conviction of antiquity in the following remarkable words:

"This, I perceive, was the opinion of the wisest men, that law was not invented by the human mind, nor is a decree of the people, but is something eternal which governs the whole world, the wisdom commanding and forbidding. Hence, they said that the principal and ultimate law was the mind of God through reason enjoining or forbidding everything. From this the law which the gods gave to mankind is rightly derived. . . For there was reason which sprung from the universal nature of things urging to do right and deterring from doing wrong, which did not then begin to be a law, when its dictates were written down, but when it originated, and it originated with the Divine Mind. Therefore, the true and principal law, fit to command and to forbid, is the right reason of the supreme god, Jupiter." [16]

How well the Greeks and Romans knew the absolute obligation of the moral law, believing themselves bound rather to suffer anything than to break it; how keen the remorse of conscience was which they felt on transgressing it, has been related by the ablest of their writers.

With the philosophers the poets concurred in extolling the supremacy and divine character of the laws of natural justice and righteousness. Antigone, when confronted with Kreon for disobeying his decree, says:

[15] See V. Cathrein, S. J., Moralphilosophie, vol. i., pp. 277, 278.
[16] De Legibus, lib. ii., c. 4.

"It was not Zeus who heralded these words,
Nor Justice, helpmeet of the gods below.
'Twas they who ratified those other laws,
And set their record in the human heart.
Nor do I deem thy heraldings so mighty,
That thou, a mortal man, couldst trample on
The written and unchanging laws of heaven.
They are not of to-day, or yesterday,
But ever live, and no one knows their birth-tide;
These, for the dread of any human anger,
I was not minded to annul and so
Incur the punishment that Heaven exacts."[17]

[17] Antigone, v. 448-458. See also, Œdipus Tyran., v. 863-871.

CHAPTER X.

THE MORAL ORDER EMANCIPATED.

97. The tendency of recent philosophers goes towards emancipating man from any external law.
98. According to their theory, the moral laws are not framed by a lawgiver, but are the necessary conditions of sentient existence and are based on the physical laws.
99. The material constituent of this new moral law, the line of conduct prescribed, is not absolute, but relative and variable.
100. So we are told by the agnostics and utilitarians themselves.
101. The formal constituent of the new moral law, the binding force of it, consists in the necessary connection of the pursuit of pleasure with the maintenance and increase of life.
102. During the first two stages of human evolution this binding force presents itself in consciousness as the supremacy of the complex and sympathetic feelings.
103. In the first stage the supremacy of such feelings is sustained by the extrinsic effects of action, that is, by political, religious and social sanction.
104. In Herbert Spencer's opinion external sanction is no moral restraint ; it only prepares the way to morality.
105. The utilitarians, however, adopt a different view. A. Bain bases morals altogether on political and moral sanction, and regards morality as an institution of society.
106. In the second stage of human evolution the supremacy of feelings is sustained by the intrinsic effects of action.
107. Such effects are thought to be a moral, and a most powerful restraint.

108. The combined restraints of the extrinsic and intrinsic effects of action constitute obligation, which, by abstraction, becomes duty in general.
109. But with the progress of evolution these restraints will disappear and their obligation will cease.
110. In the third and last stage of human evolution, the moral sense or moral faculty, meanwhile developed, will as an internal law render perfect conduct a pleasant necessity. This is the doctrine set forth by Herbert Spencer.
111. By Ch. Darwin.
112. By A. Bain.
113. By J. S. Mill.
114. By A. Comte.

97. WHAT do the new philosophers object against the moral law as viewed by Christian ethics? Not, indeed, weakness or inefficacy. Clearly, there is no such flaw in it. On the contrary, it is rather its absoluteness and its divinely-binding force that has become a stumbling-block to them. Their object is to emancipate man from every higher power. After having made him, by their philosophical speculations, independent of a Creator, they are to free him, by their ethical theories, from obedience to a lawgiver. For independence in action is the logical consequence of independence in being. Indeed, if man is evolved by his own inherent energy, without the influence of a supra-mundane cause, he need not shape his conduct according to any external rule. Hence, the new moralists do not, and cannot, recognize a moral law of divine origin, nor can they admit any other necessity than such as is inherent in self-evolving nature. Enforce the moral order they must; for its observance is felt by all to be absolutely necessary; yet they are to enforce it by a law which does not mean servitude, but emancipation and independence.

We have not here to discuss the question whether the solution of this problem is possible or not. First, we must acquaint ourselves with the attempts which the new philosophers have made at solving it. If this be not done, a decisive judgment might seem premature. Whatever information we desire in this discussion, we shall get without difficulty. For the modern theories have just on this point been spun out with perfect clearness.

98. Let us first ascertain what the evolutionary philosophers understand by law, and what essential properties they attribute to it. Their conceptions are evidently, in this regard, quite new and widely different from those entertained in former ages. To Herbert Spencer the moral laws are the conditions of sentient existence. A similar definition we read in "The Value of Life." "The moral law," says the anonymous author, "is the law of the most fundamental conditions of concerted actions of two or more human beings," "the law of social action or of social existence." Of course, as in the modern view sentient or social existence is not stationary but ever progressing, the law of its necessary conditions regards not its preservation only, but, also, its constant evolution. And as, furthermore, this same existence is not distinct in kind from that of matter, being but its highest evolution, it will also be understood that its laws are organic and identical with those of the material universe, though more complex than those of lower grades of being. Already this obvious and general notion shows the moral law as disconnected with a supreme Lawgiver, and divested of a divine character. The author of

"The Value of Life" recognizes therein the radical difference between the old and the new conception.

"It must not be forgotten," says he, "that there are two distinct meanings of the term 'law.' The first is indeed a 'code of restraining orders' promulgated by some legislative authority and accompanied by a train of arbitrary penalties whose infliction is entrusted to a powerful executive. It is well known that the original idea of a moral law was exactly that of such a code, whose promulgation and enforcement were modeled upon the examples of human states, but whose originator and avenger were supposed to be divine. . . . . The second and modern conception of a moral law is based on the type, not of criminal jurisprudence, but of the natural laws of phenomena."[1]

Recalling to mind that the continuance and increase of life or of sentient existence has been assumed as the end of human conduct, we must at once find the new definition of law in fullest accordance with the fundamental tenets of the evolutionary theory. And on remembering, furthermore, that according to modern thought pleasurable actions are beneficial to life, and painful actions destructive of it, we find the thorough consistency of the modern conception with the hedonistic doctrine no less evident. For if life is benefited by pleasure and destroyed by pain, the fundamental law of its continuance and increase coincides with the rule that throughout we ought to pursue the surplus of pleasure over pain. So, in fact, was the general law of morality worded by the hedonists, and so worded has it been developed into particular laws of conduct.

99. As in the theistic, so we must also in the hedonistic law distinguish two elements, the line of

[1] PP. 179, 180.

action prescribed and the obligation or necessity making it binding on man. The distinction will mark out the order of our further discussion. The line of action prescribed according to the hedonistic theory is the pursuit of the surplus of pleasure, social and individual, obtainable under the particular circumstances under which we live. This surplus is, as we have seen above, relative and variable. But with the object necessarily shifts also the pursuit. Consequently the line of action by which pleasure is pursued is subject to variation. It is not a line which is one for all and remains the same in different places and different times; it is, on the contrary, one in antiquity and another in our days, one for youth and another for advanced age, one for the civilized and another for the uncivilized; it is constantly varying with the stage of evolution attained, with personal peculiarities, with the environments and the state of society. And as, moreover, the surplus of pleasure is knowable only by collective experience, this line is not plain and open to the view of everybody, but is discerned only in the course of time and determined by the body of sages. The precepts, then, of the hedonistic moral law lack absoluteness, necessity, unchangeableness, plain and universal knowableness, and are clothed with the opposite attributes of relativity, changeableness and indeterminateness. Their properties will not differ, if the moral law is conceived as based on the conditions of existence; for these also are avowed to be relative and ever changing.

100. We need not fear that by saying so we misrepresent the hedonistic view. The following ex-

tracts from "The Value of Life" will amply confirm the propositions laid down.

"It [the moral law] as little resembles a 'code of restraining orders' promulgated from top of Mt. Sinai, or from the Sybilline cave, as does the law of gravitation. It cannot, therefore, be 'revealed or announced;' it must be slowly and laboriously built up, it must expect to change somewhat with the slow changes which are constantly shifting the social relations that form such a large part of its basis."[2]

"To compass the wide range of Moral Laws, in its two parts of Demonstration and Creation, is no more given to every one than is the correlative task of composing the demonstrations of science or of rising to the creations of art. This is done by the leading intellects, and the result at which they arrive is summed up in principles and in precepts, which, having received the sanction of public opinion, gradually become part of the social consciousness, and of that of each member of society. It is the élite of artists, scientists and philosophers which really constitute that 'Parliament of spiritually minded men' which Mr. Mallock labors to restrict to much narrower significance."[3]

"It is conceivable that such a state of public opinion might prevail, that husbands and wives would cease to be shocked at each other's infidelities, would become so entirely indifferent to them that neither would dream of protesting against a violation of *rights* on the part of the other. Adultery, then, which to-day is condemned on somewhat the same basis as theft and murder, would soon cease to be condemned at all, and history shows us many epochs at which this state of things has tended more or less completely to prevail. . . . . Whenever it occurs that the universal change in a social ideal of any morality, is proved by experience to be attended by good consequences instead of bad, *i. e.*, when other moralities are intensified instead of weakened, other energies are rendered more powerful, and the bonds of society drawn closer instead of relaxing, then such a change establishes its own legitimacy."[4]

"Absoluteness, it is supposed, means that a commandment holds good for all places, in all times, and for all people. . . . . Yet this definition will not hold, even of such a command as that of forbidding theft and murder."[5]

[2] P. 79. [3] P. 81. [4] PP. 184, 185. [5] P. 179.

"To positivism the moral law is a complete elaboration of the social consciousness, studying human relations in their effects, immediate and remote, on social relations. Its judgments . . . cannot be called absolute in any sense, since they are always relative to the nature and extent of social relations involved."[6]

It matters not that Herbert Spencer promises an absolute code of laws of conduct derived by strict demonstration from the intrinsic constitution of things and the conditions of existence. For, notwithstanding such assurances, he, as was shown in Chapter VI., does not deny, but, on the contrary, in every respect upholds, the relativity of good or of the surplus of pleasure, and regards the principles from which the moral rules are to be inferred as registered or accumulated sensuous experience.

101. More we need not say at present of the line of action prescribed by the hedonistic law. Much lengthier and more intricate will the discussion become, now that we have to speak of the formal element, the obligation and binding force, of this same law, though the new philosophers have just on this point enriched the world with numerous carefully elaborated theories.

That there is a necessitating force intrinsic to the hedonistic law is inferred from its coincidence with the fundamental conditions of social and individual existence. Hence, they say, arises the alternative either to seek enjoyments or to renounce existence, either to strive for the continuance of life by the pursuit of pleasure, or to see life destroyed by pain; and hence arises the necessary connection

[6] P. 195.

between morality and an end apprehended as necessary, nay, as most necessary.

102. A kind of moral necessity thus being established, the further and still more important question presents itself, how it exerts its influence on the will. H. Spencer tells us that it works in a twofold manner: first, consciously, as a motive, and then unconsciously, by means of a habit or faculty evolved in us. As a motive present in our consciousness, it is obligation or duty; as a habit, it is the moral sense, or conscience. Again, as obligation, it means the supremacy which the complex feelings have in the guidance of our conduct. This conception rests on the following consideration: While simple feelings refer to the immediate and special good, complex feelings refer to the remote and universal good resulting from our actions; wherefore, conduct guided by the latter is, upon the whole, better adapted to the preservation of life and yields a greater amount of pleasure. Accordingly it is inferred that complex, and not simple feelings, or, what is the same, complex and ideal motives, have authority to guide and determine our conduct, and it is observed that guidance by complex feelings is generally looked upon as moral, and, on the contrary, guidance by simple feelings as immoral.[7]

Superiority in guiding our conduct is given to complex feelings by the effects of action, either extrinsic or intrinsic, the extrinsic effects consisting in political, social and religious sanctions; the intrinsic, in natural consequences or results. It is thus first, as it were, propped from without; but, being sustained long

[7] Data of Ethics, §§ 42, 44.

enough, it becomes, through mental abstraction, independent, and is then called obligation or duty in general. The reader will easily understand that these several distinctions represent different stages of moral evolution, obligation or duty being developed previous to the moral sense, and external sanction establishing authority before natural sanction comes to support it. To gain a perfect understanding of the new theories, it is necessary to follow up the process of moral evolution through all its successive stages. Herbert Spencer will serve us as the most competent guide.

103. First, as he says, the preponderance of complex feelings is initiated by external sanction, that is, by the influence of our fellow-creatures, of rulers and of deities. In this stage immediate and special goods are relinquished, not because of their conflict with the distant and the general good, and present satisfactions are renounced, not on account of their intrinsic or natural evil consequences, but from fear of vengeance, of legal punishment, of divine anger, or of social reprobation. Mr. Spencer is enabled to give an exact description of this earliest state of mankind, not on the ground of historical facts, but by his extraordinary power of analysis.

"While, as in the rudest groups, neither political nor religious rule exists, the leading check to the immediate satisfaction of each desire, as it arises, is consciousness of the evils which the anger of fellow savages may entail, if satisfaction of the desire is obtained at their cost. In this early stage the imagined pains, which constitute the governing motive, are those apt to be inflicted by beings of like nature, undistinguished in power: the political, religious, and social restraints are as yet represented only by this mutual dread of vengeance. When special strength, skill, or courage makes one of them a leader in battle, he necessarily inspires greater fear than any other, and there

comes to be a more decided check on such satisfactions of the desires as will injure or offend him. Gradually as, by habitual war, chieftainship is established, the evils thought of as likely to arise from angering the chief, not only by aggression upon him, but by disobedience to him, become distinguishable both from the smaller evils which other personal antagonisms cause, and from the more diffused evils thought of as arising from social reprobation. That is, political control begins to differentiate from the more indefinite control of mutual dread.

"Meanwhile there has been developing the ghost theory. In all but the rudest groups, the double of a deceased man, propitiated at death and afterwards, is conceived as able to injure the survivors. Consequently, as fast as the ghost-theory becomes established and definite, there grows up another kind of check on immediate satisfaction of desires—a check constituted by the ideas of the evils which ghosts may inflict if offended; and when political headship gets settled and the ghosts of dead chiefs, thought of as more powerful and more relentless than other ghosts, are especially dreaded, there begins to take shape the form of restraint distinguished as religious. For a long time these three sets of restraints, with their correlative sanctions, though becoming separate in consciousness, remain co-extensive; and do so because they mostly refer to one end—success in war. . . . . To all which add that the control of social opinion, besides being directly exercised, as in the earliest stage, by praise of the brave and blame of the cowardly, comes to be indirectly exercised, with a kindred general effect, by applause of loyalty to the ruler and piety to the god. So that the three differentiated forms of control, which grow up along with militant organization and action, while enforcing kindred restraints and incentives, also enforce one another, and their separate and joint disciplines have the common character that they involve the sacrifice of immediate special benefits to obtain more distant and general benefits."

"At the same time there have been developing, under the same three sanctions, restraints and incentives of another order, similarly characterized by subordination of the proximate to the remote. . . . . The fact that success in war is endangered if his followers fight among themselves, forces itself on the attention of the ruler. He has a strong motive for restraining quarrels, and, therefore, for preventing the aggressions which cause quarrels; and, as his power becomes greater, he forbids

the aggressions and inflicts punishments for disobedience. Presently, political restraints of this class, like those of the preceding class, are enforced by religious restraints. The sagacious chief, succeeding in war partly because he thus enforces order among his followers, leaves behind him a tradition of the commands he habitually gave. Dread of his ghost tends to produce regard for these commands; and they eventually acquire sacredness. With further social evolution come, in like manner, further interdicts, checking aggressions of less serious kinds; until, eventually, there grows up a body of civil laws. And then, in the way shown, arise beliefs concerning the divine disapproval of these minor, as well as of the major, civil offences: ending, occasionally, in a set of religious injunctions harmonizing with, and enforcing, the political injunctions. While simultaneously there develops, as before, a social sanction for these rules of internal conduct, strengthening the political and religious sanctions." [8]

104. This threefold control generates in man the notion of obligation, consisting as yet but in external coercion, and habitually associates with obedience to the same the surrender of immediate and special for distant and general benefits. This is undoubtedly a step towards the subjection of simple to complex feelings, and the postponement of the present to the future good. Still it is not moral control; because, by it, man does not perform his actions for their intrinsic goodness—that is, for the pleasure which they naturally yield, nor avoid wrong for its intrinsic badness—that is, for the pain which, by its nature, it must produce.

"The command of the political ruler is at first obeyed, not because of its perceived rectitude, but simply because it is his command, which there will be a penalty for disobeying. The check is not a moral representation of the evil consequences which the forbidden act will, in the nature of things, cause, but it is a mental representation of factitious evil consequences." [9]

[8] Data of Ethics, § 44.

[9] Ibid.

Herbert Spencer thinks that this lowest and preliminary stage of morality is not yet generally passed through, because even now good is frequently done and wrong abstained from only from such imperfect motives.

"Down to our time we trace in legal phrases the original doctrine that aggression of one citizen on another is wrong and will be punished, not so much because of the injury done him, as because of the implied disregard of the king's will. Similarly, the sinfulness of breaking a divine injunction was universally, at one time, and is still by many, held to consist in the disobedience to God, rather than in the deliberate entailing of injury; and even now it is a common belief that acts are right only if performed in conscious fulfilment of the divine will: nay, are even wrong if performed otherwise. The like holds, too, with that further control exercised by public opinion." [10]

Still, external coercion is, in Mr. Spencer's opinion, not to be undervalued. It prepares the way for morality, because it subjects proximate to remote feelings, while it corresponds with moral control both in regard to its injunctions and to the general nature of the mental processes which produce conformity to those injunctions. And it is a preparation for morality quite natural and even necessary; for undeveloped minds are not able to represent to themselves the remote consequences which actions naturally entail, but they vividly conceive the punishments threatened by personal agencies.[11]

105. Also, the utilitarians and positivists recur to external sanctions as the primitive form of obligation. Pointing out in what they consist, J. S. Mill says:

"They are the hope of favor and the fear of displeasure from our fellow-creatures or from the Ruler of the Universe, along with whatever we may have of sympathy or affection for them,

[10] Data of Ethics, § 44. [11] Ibid.

and love and awe of Him, inclining us to do His will independently of selfish consequences." [12]

Utilitarianism, however, takes a much higher view of external coercion than egoistic hedonism does. Social sanction is not main force, nor is obedience to it below morality. Man is made for society, since he is part of its organism. Accordingly, society has a right to direct, by laws and injunctions, his conduct to its own well-being and happiness, as in general every organism regulates the functions of its components and reduces them to harmony. Social control, therefore, is for the individual really moral; it is only society itself that cannot be subject to direction from without, since it is, by its nature, independent and above moral duty. For, as the author of the "The Value of Life" remarks:

"Duty, morality, destiny, final purpose, are terms derived from the relations of its elements to it and to one another—relations so fundamental that they involve the conditions of social existence by defining the mode of existence of these organic elements. We cannot apply them to society, as a whole, because we are acquainted with no analogous organism with which it may be brought into relation." [13]

A complete moral system based on social sanction has been devised by A. Bain.[14] Following in all his philosophical works a decidedly materialistic tendency, he regards the good of mankind as the ethical end, which he defines as a certain portion of the welfare of human beings living together in society, realized through rules of conduct duly enforced. These rules, invented and enforced by society, he terms moral laws, duties, or morality. Some of them are

[12] Utilitarianism, chap. iii. [13] P. 94.

[14] Moral Science (New York: Appleton & Co., 1875), chaps. ii., iii.

imposed under penalty for neglect or violation, and are morality proper; others, whose only external support is reward, constitute optional morality, virtue, merit, nobleness. The party imposing penalties for the neglect of the rules of the first class—that is, of morality proper—is called authority, or government: and this, again, is either public and official, establishing political sanction by the laws of the land, or not official, because consisting of the members of society in their private capacity. The duties enforced by the latter are sometimes called laws of honor, because their neglect is punished by withdrawing from the violator the honor and esteem of his fellow-citizens, a sanction which is usually termed social or popular. The laws of the land enacted by public authority carry out the most essential parts of morality, as abstaining from injuries, fulfilling contracts, reciprocating services rendered, assistance in cases of extreme need. The law of honor prescribes courage and prudence as regards self, conformity with tastes and usages, gratitude, and relief of others' needs beyond the strict legal injunctions, religious orthodoxy, Sabbath observance, chastity, and forbids drunkenness, suicide, and gross inhumanity.

The second class of rules, constituting optional morality, is not enforced by authority, but by individuals, nor by laws proper and penalties, but by rewards. The virtuous acts thus encouraged are the *liberal* performance of duties, properly so-called, as, for instance, of the family duties and duties of justice in cases in which the law does not interfere, and of benevolence without stipulation or compensation. A. Bain thus arrives at the conclusion that morality

is an institution of society, though not an arbitrary institution, and that its obligation merely consists in social sanction.

"Morality is the systematic codification of prudential and benevolent actions, rendered obligatory by what is termed penalties or punishment; an entirely distinct motive, artificially framed by human society, but made so familiar to every member of society as to be a second nature. None are allowed to be prudential or sympathizing in their own way. . . . No doubt, there ought to be a general coincidence between what prudence and sympathy would dictate, and what law dictates; but the precise adjustment is a matter of institution. A moral act is not merely an act tending to reconcile the good of the agent with the good of the whole society; it is an act prescribed by the social authority, and rendered obligatory by its authoritative prescription, and not by its fulfilling the primary ends of the social institution. A bad law is still a law, an ill-judged moral precept is still a moral precept, felt as such by every loyal citizen."[15]

With respect to actions merely self-regarding, A. Bain knows no law, as may be understood from the following passage:

"The view practically proceeded upon now and in most ages is that virtue discharges a man's obligations to his fellows, which being accomplished, he is then at liberty to seek what pleases himself."[16]

106. Still, whatever may be the difference between Herbert Spencer and the utilitarians concerning the moral worth of external sanctions, political, social, and religious, it is generally agreed that the subordination of lower feelings effected by them is only the first stage of moral evolution. Yet, at the same time, low as this beginning may be, it is thought to lead on to greater perfection, as everywhere in nature the imperfect begets the perfect, and the lower pro-

[15] Moral Science, chap. iii. [16] Ibid., chap. i.

duces the higher form of existence. The stage of moral development proximately ensuing is the guidance of conduct by the foresight of the natural consequences of action, a stage in which the complex feelings commence to gain superiority by the good to which they intrinsically refer. How it is conditioned on the preceding period, and how it grows out of it, Mr. Spencer does not fail to explain at full length.

"Only by these lower feelings and restraints could be maintained conditions under which the higher feelings and restraints evolve. It is thus alike with the self-regarding feelings and the other-regarding feelings. The pains which improvidence will bring, and the pleasures to be gained by storing up things for future use and by laboring to get such things, can be habitually contrasted in thought, only as fast as settled social arrangements make accumulation possible: and that there may arise such settled arrangements, fear of the seen ruler, of the unseen ruler, and of public opinion, must come into play. Only after political, religious, and social restraints have produced a stable community, can there be sufficient experience of the pains, positive and negative, sensational and emotional, which crimes of aggression cause, as to generate that moral aversion to them constituted by consciousness of their intrinsically evil results. And more manifest still is it that such a moral sentiment as that of abstract equity, which is offended, not only by material injuries done to men, but also by political arrangements that place them at a disadvantage, can evolve only after the social stage reached gives familiar experience both of the pains flowing directly from injustices, and also of those flowing indirectly from the class-privileges, which make injustices easy."[17]

The contiguity of the two stages being thus stated, their characteristic difference is set forth in a powerful description. Moral worth is denied to the former and granted only to the latter.

"The truly moral deterrent from murder is not constituted by a representation of hanging as a consequence, or by a rep-

[17] Data of Ethics, § 45.

resentation of tortures in hell as a consequence, or by a representation of the horror and hatred excited in fellow-men : but by a representation of the necessary natural results—the infliction of death-agony on the victim, the destruction of all his possibilities of happiness, the entailed sufferings to his belongings. Neither the thought of imprisonment, nor of divine anger, nor of social disgrace, is that which constitutes the moral check on theft : but the thought of injury to the person robbed, joined with a vague consciousness of the general evils caused by disregard of proprietary rights. Those who reprobate the adulterer on moral grounds, have their minds filled, not with ideas of action for damages, or of future punishment following the breach of a commandment, or of loss of reputation ; but they are occupied with ideas of unhappiness entailed on the grieved wife or husband, the damaged lives of children, and the diffused mischiefs which go along with disregard of the marriage tie. Conversely, the man who is moved by a moral feeling to help another in a difficulty, does not picture to himself any reward here or hereafter ; but pictures only the better condition he is trying to bring about. One who is morally prompted to fight against a social evil has neither material benefit nor popular applause before his mind ; but only the mischiefs he seeks to remove and the increased well-being which will follow their removal. Throughout, then, the moral motive differs from the motives it is associated with in this, that instead of being constituted by representations of incidental, collateral, non-necessary consequences of acts, it is constituted by representations of consequences which the acts naturally produce." [18]

Nor is this the view of Mr. Spencer alone. The positivists and utilitarians also speak of a higher stage of moral evolution, in which good is loved and evil is abhorred for its own sake, certain actions being performed or abstained from, not for social rewards expected or punishments dreaded, but for their beneficial or injurious effects on society.

107. To evince the power of the motives present to the mind by virtue of complex feelings, Mr. Spen-

[18] Data of Ethics, § 45.

cer resorts to his theory of accumulated experience. The representations of the results of action are registered in the human organism by modifying the nervous system, accumulated and transmitted by heredity. Thus superposed in a long series of generations, they have, though losing in distinction by accumulation, grown to an immense volume, and so form a feeling which is at once massive and vague.[19]

The natural consequences of our actions are deemed to constitute a most powerful motive of morality, also for the reason that they present themselves as a sanction which is necessary and inevitable. Benefits or injuries result from conduct, according as it is well or ill regulated, with the inexorable necessity of physical laws, with which it is in nobody's power to interfere. Natural reward does not depend on the good will of others, and so, likewise, can natural penalties not be averted by excuses or a subsequent change of mind on the part of the guilty, or by the compassion of a judge, or absolution by the ministers of religion.[20]

108. However, the restraints constituted by the representation of the intrinsic effects of our actions are gaining strength only gradually. Meantime, whilst evolving to perfection, they are joined with the restraints constituted by the representation of the external effects, in the shape of political, religious and social penalties, and during this time conduct is the result of their conjoint influences.

Now, it is by these two restraints combined that obligation is constituted. The intrinsic effects of action, proximate and remote, experienced and rep-

[19] Data of Ethics, § 45.

[20] See Popular Science Monthly of April, 1882, Article, Goldwin Smith on Scientific Morality.

resented in thought evince the authority of the complex feelings as guides of conduct; the extrinsic effects, experienced and submitted to, add external compulsion or coercion. Authority, with compulsion, makes up obligation, and the consciousness of both generates the sense of duty. But let us hear Mr. Spencer himself.

"What is the common character of the feelings that prompt honesty, truthfulness, diligence, providence, etc., which men habitually find to be better prompters than the appetites and simple impulses? They are all complex, re-representative feelings, occupied with the future rather than the present. The idea of authoritativeness has, therefore, come to be connected with feelings having these traits; the implication being that the lower and simpler feelings are without authority. And this idea of authoritativeness is one element in the abstract consciousness of duty.

"But there is another element—the element of coerciveness. This originates from experience of those several forms of restraint that have, as above described, established themselves in the course of civilization—the political, religious, and social. To the effects of punishments inflicted by law and public opinion on conduct of certain kinds, Dr. Bain ascribes the feeling of moral obligation. And I agree with him to the extent of thinking that by them is generated the sense of compulsion which the consciousness of duty includes, and which the word obligation indicates. The existence of an earlier and deeper element, generated as above described, is, however, I think, implied by the fact that certain of the higher self-regarding feelings, instigating prudence and economy, have a moral authority in opposition to the simpler self-regarding feelings: showing that apart from any thought of factitious penalties or improvidence, the feeling constituted by the representation of the natural penalties has acquired an acknowledged superiority. But accepting in the main the view that fears of the political and social penalties (to which I think the religious must be added) have generated that sense of coerciveness which goes along with the thought of postponing present to future, and personal desires to the claims of others, it here chiefly concerns us to note that this sense of coerciveness becomes indirectly

connected with the feelings distinguished as moral. . . . . Thinking of the extrinsic effects of a forbidden act, excites a dread, which continues while the intrinsic effects of the act are thought of; and being thus linked with these intrinsic effects causes a vague sense of moral compulsion. Emerging as the motive does but slowly from amidst the political, religious, and social motives, it long participates in that consciousness of subordination to some external agency which is joined with them; and only as it becomes distinct and predominant does it lose this associated consciousness—only then does the feeling of obligation fade." [21]

109. As the last words quoted from Mr. Spencer intimate, obligation will at last cease; for its elements belong to lower stages of evolution and must, therefore, in the course of time, yield their place to higher forms of activity. The external restraint will no more exercise any influence as a motive, when the moral restraint will have become distinct and predominant. And the moral restraint itself, which may be called self-compulsion, will, as evolution goes on, gradually vanish.

"This self-compulsion, which at a relatively high stage becomes more and more a substitute for compulsion from without, must itself, at a still higher stage, practically disappear. If some action to which the special motive is insufficient, is performed in obedience to the feeling of moral obligation, the fact proves that the special faculty concerned is not yet equal to its function—has not acquired such strength that the required activity has become its normal activity, yielding its due amount of pleasure. With complete evolution then, the sense of obligation, not ordinarily present in consciousness, will be awakened only on those extraordinary occasions that prompt breach of the laws otherwise spontaneously conformed to." [22]

110. With this last phase the climax of moral evolution begins. At this stage, morality is no more an obligation, but it does not cease, therefore, to be a

[21] Data of Ethics, § 46. [22] Ibid., § 47.

necessity, though, in consciousness, it is no longer apprehended as such and recognized as a motive of action. It has now become a law identified with our organism, prompting and determining man to right action and accomplishing his happiness without being thought of. The moral law is now the moral sense, enlightened and perfected so far as intuitively to manifest the right line of conduct, and prompting the will so powerfully and so completely in harmony with human nature as to render every right action both spontaneous and pleasant. Such a state of man is the natural result of the long process of evolution. The experience of utility made by preceding generations, registered in the nervous system, accumulated and transmitted to posterity, will at last transform the human organism to such an extent that general moral intuitions of what is right and wrong will arise independently of personal experience, induction and reasoning. And human nature will be so completely adapted to all requirements both social and individual, that the useful will perfectly coincide with the pleasurable. It will then no more be necessary to regulate conduct by the remote and general consequences of action; the present satisfaction of desires will harmonize with the future, and personal with universal happiness. The immediate pleasure will be the only motive of action, and, being the highest and purest we are capable of, it will spontaneously lead to the most perfect conduct. In brief, this supreme stage of morality is sketched in the following lines of "Data of Ethics":

"Evidently with complete adaptation to the social state, that

element in the moral consciousness, which is expressed by the word obligation, will disappear. The higher actions required for the harmonious carrying on of life will be as much matters of course, as are those lower actions which the simple desires prompt. In their proper times and places and proportions, the moral sentiments will guide men just as spontaneously and adequately as now do sensations. And though, joined with their regulating influence when this is called for, will exist latent ideas of the evils which non-conformity would bring; these will occupy the mind no more than do ideas of the evils of starvation at the time when a healthy appetite is being satisfied by a meal." [23]

Mr. Spencer is neither the only one nor the first among recent philosophers to set forth this new theory of the moral law. In the opinion of others, as well as his own, obligation is first external coercion, natural sanction, and the authority of higher motives, then it turns into abstract and self-subsisting duty, and at last disappears, more or less, to yield its place to the moral sense or to conscience, which is regarded as the moral law in its supreme and most perfect efficacy. It will be proper to render the views of some writers in particular.

111. To commence with Ch. Darwin. To him "the imperious word 'ought' seems merely to imply the consciousness of the existence of a persistent instinct, either innate or acquired, serving him as a guide, though liable to be disobeyed." As such leading instincts, those must be regarded which are social. For, though momentarily weaker than the self-regarding ones, they are more persistent; and hence, if disobeyed, will cause in us a feeling of dissatisfaction and awaken the resolution to act differently in the future.

[23] Data of Ethics, § 46.

"This," he remarks, "is conscience; for conscience looks backward and judges past actions, inducing that kind of dissatisfaction which, if weak, we call regret; if severe, remorse. . . . Man, thus prompted, will, through long habit, acquire such perfect self-command, that his desires and passions will at last instantly yield to his social sympathies, and there will no longer be a struggle between them. The still hungry, or the still revengeful, man will not think of stealing food or of wreaking his vengeance. . . . Thus, at last, man comes to feel, through acquired, and perhaps inherited habit, that it is best for him to obey his more persistent instincts."

Arrived at this point, man has attained to the height of morality. The moral sense, fundamentally identical with the social instinct, is then fully developed; it dictates all the rules of moral conduct, and enforces them throughout. In the lower stages of civilization, man is, to a great extent, directed by the express wishes and judgments of his fellow-men, and still oftener by his own selfish desires. But when "the feelings of love and sympathy and the power of self-command will have become strengthened, and the power of reasoning will have become clear, so that man can appreciate the justice of the judgment of his fellow-men, he will feel himself impelled, independently of any pain or pleasure felt at the moment, to certain lines of conduct. He may then say: I am the supreme judge of my conduct, and, in the words of Kant, I will not in my own person violate the dignity of humanity." [24]

112. To A. Bain, as was said above, moral rules are a social or governmental institution. Yet, though the production of organized society, they are only the first steps of human progress. Obeyed during a long period, they generate the moral sentiment or conscience, which, as he says, may be described by such

[24] Descent of Man, chap. iii., The Moral Sense.

terms as "moral approbation or disapprobation, and involves, when highly developed, a peculiar and unmistakable revulsion of mind at what is wrong and a strong resentment towards the wrongdoer, which becomes remorse in the case of self." Conscience, thus developed, supersedes its parent, the external rule, having itself become the law of conduct, the law intrinsic to man, absolute and independent.

"By a familiar effect of contiguous association, the dread of punishment clothes the forbidden act with a feeling of aversion, which, at the end, persists of its own accord, and without reference to the punishment. Actions that have long been connected in the mind with pains and penalties, come to be contemplated with a *disinterested* repugnance; they seem to give pain on their own account. This is a parallel, from the side of pain, of the acquired attachment to money. Now, when, by such transference, a self-subsisting sentiment of aversion has been created, the conscience seems to be detached from all external sanctions, and to possess an isolated footing in the mind. It has passed through the stage of reference to authority, and has become a law to itself." [25]

113. Most remarkable is J. Stuart Mill's theory of conscience.[26] This, he thinks, is the ultimate sanction of morality, since, without conscientious feeling, no other motive, not even that of the divine law, can exercise on the will any influence.

"There is, I am aware, a disposition to believe that a person who sees in moral obligation a transcendent fact—an objective reality belonging to the province of 'Things in Themselves'—is likely to be more obedient to it than one who believes it to be entirely subjective, having its seat in human conscience only. But whatever a person's opinion may be on the point of Ontology, the force he is urged by is his own subjective feeling, and is exactly measured by its strength. No one's belief that duty is an objective reality is stronger than the belief that God is so; yet the belief in God, apart from the expectation of actual re-

[25] Moral Science, chap. iii. [26] Utilitarianism, chap. iii.

ward or punishment, only operates on conduct through, and in proportion to, the subjective religious feeling. The sanction, so far as it is disinterested, is always in the mind itself."

But what is conscience, and how does it work as a sanction? To this question the following answer is given:

"The internal sanction of duty, whatever our standard of duty may be, is one and the same—a feeling in our mind: a pain more or less intense, attendant on violation of duty, which, in properly-cultivated moral natures, rises, in the more serious cases, into shrinking from it as an impossibility. This feeling, when disinterested and connecting itself with the pure idea of duty, and not with some particular form of it, or with any of the merely accessory circumstances, is the essence of conscience; though, in that complex phenomenon as it actually exists, the simple fact is in general all encrusted over with collateral associations, derived from sympathy, from love, and still more from fear, from all the forms of religious feeling, from the recollections of childhood and of all our past life, from self-esteem, desire of the esteem of others, and, occasionally, self-abasement. . . . . The binding force, however, consists in the existence of a mass of feeling which must be broken through, in order to do what violates our standard of right, and which, if we do nevertheless violate that standard, will probably have to be encountered afterwards in the form of remorse. Whatever theory we have of the nature or origin of conscience, this is what essentially constitutes it."

He does not think that conscience, or the moral faculty, as it is sometimes called, is innate in man, but, rather, considers it as acquired.

"The moral feelings are not, indeed, a part of our nature, in the sense of being in any perceptible degree present in all of us. . . . . The moral faculty, if not a part of our nature, is a natural outgrowth from it, capable, in a certain small degree, of springing up spontaneously; and susceptible of being brought, by cultivation, to a high degree of development."

And, as he further remarks, "it is susceptible, by

a sufficient use of external sanctions and the force of early impressions, of being cultivated in almost every direction: so that there is hardly anything so absurd, or so mischievous, that it may not, by means of these influences, be made to act on the human mind with all the authority of conscience."

But, if conscience may be cultivated in any direction, how is it that it supports utilitarian morality better than any other? And if it is an artificial creation, why will it not, as intellectual culture goes on, yield to the dissolving force of analysis? There is, he answers, in nature an indestructible basis of moral sentiment, which upholds utilitarian righteousness.

"This firm foundation," he says, "is that of the social feelings of mankind, the desire to be in unity with our fellow-creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influence of advancing civilization. The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, so habitual to man, that except in some unusual circumstances, or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body, and this association is riveted more and more as mankind are further removed from the state of savage independence. . . . . Now, society between human beings, except in the relation of master and slave, is manifestly impossible on any other footing than that the interests of all are to be consulted. Society between equals can only exist on the understanding that the interests of all are to be regarded equally."

In this way, he again remarks, men grow up unable to conceive as possible to them a state of total disregard of other people's interests, or to ignore the necessity of abstaining from injury. Rather, they become used to co-operate with one another, and to propose to themselves a collective, not an individual interest, as the aim of their actions;

and as long as they are thus co-operating, their ends are identified with those of others. This mode of conceiving ourselves and human life is not artificial, and therefore apt to be relinquished; on the contrary, as civilization goes on, it is felt to be more and more natural. From all these considerations J. S. Mill comes to the conclusion that, the social feelings once developed and heightened, the utilitarian morality will have the strongest sanction in our own mind. But let us hear his own words:

"If we now suppose the feeling of unity to be taught as a religion, and the whole force of education, of institutions, and of opinion directed, as it once was in the case of religion, to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides both by the profession and the practice of it, I think that no one who can realize this conception will feel any misgiving about the sufficiency of the ultimate sanction of the Happiness morality. To any ethical student who finds the realization difficult, I recommend as a means of facilitating it, the second of M. Comte's two principal works, the *Système de Politique Positive*. I entertain the strongest objections to the system of politics and morals set forth in that treatise; but I think it has superabundantly shown the possibility of giving to the service of humanity, even without the aid of belief in a Providence, both the physical power and the efficacy of religion, making it take hold of human life, and color all thought, feeling and action, in a manner of which the greatest ascendency ever exercised by any religion may be but a type and foretaste, and of which the danger is, not that it should be insufficient, but that it should be so excessive as to interfere unduly with human freedom and individuality."

114. The reader may ask in what the powerful support consists which A. Comte has given to morality apart from divine religion. A few remarks may serve as an answer. To the author of positivism, morality is the prevalence of the affections over the intellect, affection being understood chiefly as love

for humanity. This view, he thinks, is sustained by the very structure of the human brain, in which the organs of affection exceed those of the understanding both in number and in volume. As a consequence, moral conduct will be secured if love or affection is cultivated and heightened. And this is done chiefly by the worship of the gentler sex. Governments direct the exterior activity of mankind, the priests enlighten the understanding, but woman, since the sympathetic affections are prominent in her, inspires love. She, therefore, is the representative, the personification of Humanity, of the Grand Being, and the source of moral feeling. Every man must continually worship her as mother, spouse, or daughter; also the priest must always be under her influence; even when performing the rites of worship in the temple of Humanity, he must be surrounded by the fair sex. It is not denied that in A. Comte's system many other causes are considered as contributing towards the growth of virtue and righteousness, but the worship of woman is evidently regarded as chiefly and most directly arousing and sustaining the moral sense. Hence, some positivists do not hesitate to maintain that sexual love is, as the root of altruism, the foundation of morality.

Clearly, it is only in the last stage of moral evolution that the great end to which the new philosophy aspires is achieved. In earlier periods man feels himself yet dependent on the arbitrary power of fellowmen, or of a ruler, or of the Deity, or subject to the stern necessity of nature pitilessly inflicting on him the evils caused by his actions, and he is good only because he feels himself thus subject and dependent.

But the moral sense being, after hundreds and thousands of years, at last evolved, he acts morally, not by force, but of his own accord; not from fear and with pain, but with delight and by determination intrinsic to him. He then is, as to conduct, a law unto himself, a law supreme and absolute, and for this very reason he is morally perfect. The emancipation of the moral order is then fully and most gloriously accomplished.

CHAPTER XI.

INDEPENDENT MORALITY INCOMPATIBLE WITH LAW.

115. The new theories must be carefully examined, before they can be accepted as a satisfactory solution of the problem of independent morality.

116. Moral laws cannot be based on physical laws, but must be derived from Divine Reason.

117. According to the new theories there is no line of right conduct that can be prescribed, such a line being uncertain and unknowable.

118. Hence the material constituent of the moral law is done away with, and law itself made an impossibility.

119. Life, whether social or individual, is not a necessary end.

120. Pleasure is not the height of vitality.

121. Nor is it a necessary means to preserve and increase life.

122. Complex or higher feelings have no general and absolute authority ; this we must infer from the statements of Herbert Spencer himself.

123. Social instincts are no general standard of conduct ; they are, moreover, not superior but, on the contrary, subject, to the human will.

124. External coercion, consisting in religious, political and social sanction, is not sufficient to sustain the supremacy of higher feelings ; for, it is either merely imaginary,

125. Or can be easily resisted by united forces, and thus will result rather in disorder than in social peace and harmony.

126. Consistently with materialistic views, society has over its members only physical power, and, consequently, the influence which it exercises over them consists in mere coercion.

127. Nor is society moral previously to its members, whence it follows that it cannot be for them the source of morality.
128. The natural consequences of action are during our earthly existence no sufficient support of morality; rather they will undermine it, if they are considered as its only sanction.
129. The objections against hedonistic morals are not solved by saying that the remote, and not the proximate effects of actions ought to determine our conduct; for Herbert Spencer himself holds that the laws of conduct must be derived from proximate as well as remote results.
130. Moreover, remote results, upon the whole, constitute the weaker motive.
131. And in no case can they impose a necessity on man, if he is absolutely independent.
132. Nor can the effects of action for society constitute a restraint necessitating moral conduct; for they, too, are remote and as a motive yield in strength to self-interest, particularly if man be no more than an organic being.
133. The moral sense does not remove these difficulties. Resorting to it, J. S. Mill moves in a vicious circle.
134. Duty in general, as viewed by the hedonists, is a mere abstraction devoid of any efficient influence on the will, at least, of cultured man.
135. Every element, then, of the moral law is utterly destroyed by the new theories.

115. NEW theories are often, like great discoveries, hailed with unbounded enthusiasm. When first set forth, they seem to be new-revealed truths, which heretofore were no less hidden from inferior minds than the distant stars, discovered by keen astronomers, are from the naked eye. Yet, not all theories maintain their prestige in the length of time. Not a few of them, when closely looked into, have been found to be illusive like mirages seen in the desert.

We cannot be expected to consider the new-fashioned moral law, the progeny of modern speculation, rather as a reality than as a fiction, before

having put it to a test. Reason commanding us to proceed in a matter of so great importance, not with blind faith, but with careful examination, our assent to the new theories of moral obligation must depend on many a question previously to be answered. We must first review the principles from which they start and the conclusions in which they end. We must inquire whether they account for the moral consciousness of mankind, as it exists and has always existed in the course of history, whether it supersedes the Christian view with a doctrine more consistent with human nature, whether it sets up in the place of Christian precepts rules of conduct which embody a purer morality and have a binding force of greater efficacy. Only when all these questions will have been thoroughly discussed, and solid reasons will be seen to require an answer to them in the affirmative, shall we be prepared to accept the new moral law, and to regard the modern philosophers as wise lawgivers sent to uphold and elevate the moral order by emancipating it from a supra-mundane power.

116. From the preceding discussions we have formed a full idea of the new law of morality; we know its definition, its formal as well as its material element, the precepts which it enjoins, and the necessity or binding force which it gives them; we also know the different stages of evolution through which both its constituents have to pass, and, in particular, the different phases which its obligation assumes. It will, therefore, not be difficult to subject its every part and its every feature to a thorough examination.

Is it, indeed, an improvement of the notion of the moral law, that it is no longer derived from reason,

but from the nature of the material universe, or, as the author of "The Value of Life" would say, that it is founded, not on the basis of criminal justice, but on the basis of the natural laws of phenomena? Even if the moral laws of conduct were identical with the laws of physical phenomena, they would yet have to be traced back to reason. For law, of whatever kind it be, effects what only an intelligent mind is competent to produce and what only the Divine Mind could pre-arrange in the entire creation—order, unity, adjustment of means to ends. In particular, the law that regulates the actions of rational beings cannot but originate in a reason superior to that of man and of any finite intelligence.

But the moral laws are by no means identical with the physical laws of nature. While the latter, because they are of compelling necessity, cannot be resisted, the former can be disobeyed, because they are consistent with human freedom. They, therefore, do not involve more than a moral constraint, a necessary connection between means and ends conceived by the Supreme Reason, sanctioned by the Highest Will, and intelligibly manifested to man. To say that this manifestation can be made only in a supernatural way, from the top of Mt. Sinai, is the grossest misrepresentation. The creation itself of human reason is the promulgation of the moral law eternally conceived and enacted by the Supreme Being.

117. The line of right conduct to be prescribed, the material constituent of the new law, we have already shown to be, not absolute, but relative and varying, and, hence, we have inferred its indeterminateness and unknowableness. This conclusion

needs no further proof. If good in general, conceived as conducive to the ultimate end, is unknowable, the good which is for the same end a necessity must be so for yet more convincing reasons. To remove any doubt that might yet be possible, it will suffice to quote some passages from Herbert Spencer.

"A code of perfect personal conduct can never be made definite. Many forms of life, diverging from one another in considerable degrees, may be so carried on in society as entirely to fulfill the conditions to harmonious co-operation. And if various types of men adapted to various types of activity may thus lead lives that are severally complete, no specific statement of the activities universally required for personal well-being is possible."[1]

"Under the ethics of personal conduct considered in relation to existing conditions, have to come all questions concerning the degree in which immediate personal welfare has to be postponed to either ultimate personal welfare or to the welfare of others. As now carried on, life hourly sets the claims of present self against the claims of future self, and hourly brings individual interests face to face with the interests of other individuals, taken singly or associated. In many such cases the decisions can be nothing more than compromises; and ethical science, here necessarily empirical, can do no more than aid in making compromises that are least objectionable."[2]

Mr. Spencer maintains in particular that there is a constant conflict between egoism and altruism, between social and personal welfare, and that a compromise between them is the only possible thing that can be arrived at, yet a compromise always imperfect and indefinite as long as the normal state of mankind is not yet reached.[3]

"During the transitional stages there are necessitated successive compromises between the moral code which asserts the claims of society *versus* those of the individual, and the moral code which asserts the claims of the individual *versus* those of

[1] Data of Ethics, § 108. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., §§ 90, 91.

the society. And evidently each such compromise, though for the time being authoritative, admits of no consistent or definite expression." [4]

Since society is, like individuals, in perpetual changes and transition, ever progressing from one stage of evolution to another, its conditions of existence, too, and the claims arising from them must be constantly varying. Accordingly Mr. Spencer again concludes:

"Hence, for each kind and degree of social evolution determined by external conflict and internal friendship, there is an appropriate compromise between the moral code of enmity and the moral code of amity: not, indeed, a definable, consistent compromise, but a compromise fairly well understood. This compromise, vague, ambiguous, illusive though it may be, is, nevertheless, for the time being, authoritative." [5]

118. These statements of Mr. Spencer, perfectly consistent with the hedonistic theory, whether egoistic or universalistic, clearly amount to the assertion that there are no rules of right conduct or moral precepts which are definite enough to be universally knowable; nay, more, that there are no general precepts at all possible. On account of the ever-succeeding stages of evolution, there are none and cannot be any that ought to be obeyed in all places, at all times; none that can be made binding on men under all conditions, none that manifest themselves to human consciousness unmistakably and absolutely, none that, amidst the ever-clashing interests, can be imposed as obligatory on any particular persons and under any particular circumstances. For who is to consider as moral precepts Mr. Spencer's compromises between egoism and altruism, compromises made by

[4] Data of Ethics, § 55. [5] Ibid., § 50.

men themselves, temporary, vague, ambiguous, and illogical?

Theories which set forth such a doctrine do not account for the moral consciousness of mankind, as it has existed from the remotest times; they are the plain denial of all moral convictions, to the existence of which the best and most trustworthy writers have testified, and which our own mind is irresistibly necessitated to embrace. Nor do they build up a moral law. On the contrary, they deny from the outset its very possibility. For a law which enjoins no precepts, which marks out no line of conduct, is no less an impossibility than a palace without building materials.

119. Shall we arrive at a better result if we examine the formal element of the new moral law, that is, its binding force and necessity? The discussion of this question will be somewhat more complicate.

Let us, first, briefly recapitulate the doctrine laid down on this point by hedonism and utilitarianism. The necessitating force of moral laws follows from their coincidence with the fundamental conditions of existence, both social and individual; for on the ground of such coincidence they must be conceived as necessary means to the end apprehended as the most necessary. But existence is desirable only as far as it is pleasurable and is preserved and evolved only by pleasure-yielding actions. Hence there is a necessary connection between existence and the pursuit of pleasure. Again, to the surplus of pleasure we are led by complex feelings constituting higher motives. Consequently the obligation of acting morally is the supremacy which complex feelings have

as guides of conduct. This supremacy is sustained, first by external coercion ; then by the natural consequences of action, and, later on, becomes, through mental abstraction, independent and self-subsisting. With still further development, however, obligation disappears, to yield its place to the moral sense, which, attended by the purest pleasure, spontaneously determines man to perfect conduct. Every one of the principles laid down and of the conclusions drawn from them, requires a special consideration, and will, after a careful examination, be found to be untrue.

First, sentient existence, be it individual or social, is not man's ultimate end, as we have already demonstrated, and consequently, not the most necessary end, either. It is no necessary end at all. Certainly, the continuance of individual sentient existence is not intended by nature, which sets life within very narrow limits, and constantly destroys by death what it has produced by birth. Nor is man himself bound to look upon his present existence as necessary. He may sacrifice it for higher and more universal goods, and the sacrifice so made is universally regarded as heroic virtue. Life may, if beset with unavoidable pains and deprived of hope, be no longer desirable for him, and cannot, indeed, under such circumstances, be so, according to the hedonistic view. Yet, we are told that at least the existence of the species, or of society, is a necessary purpose of nature. Certainly not the existence of the lower species ; for they are destined to perish in the universal struggle. At most, the existence of the highest species can be conceived by evolutionists as a necessary end. But what

the highest species will be, whether the human race as now existing, or a kind of yet superior beings, they have not yet satisfactorily explained. And so it is, also, with the existence of society. Every particular form of it is but transitory. That, at most, which is the crown of evolution, may be thought to be permanent. According to Mr. Spencer, however, even this new paradise of ideal perfection is not everlasting; on the contrary, as distribution and redistribution of matter and forces are ever going on, it will be destroyed at last by a collision of heavenly bodies.

But, in strictness, we ought not to inquire at all into the purpose of nature; for, according to the evolutionary view, nature is purposeless. The principal question to be solved is, whether man apprehends social existence as the most necessary end. If he is endowed with merely organic faculties, with a will fit to desire only the pleasurable, it is even impossible for him to apprehend and to pursue any other than an egoistic end. This we have shown in a former chapter. It matters little that utilitarian philosophers contradict this conclusion. They have themselves given a solution of the question in effect scarcely different. As we have heard them say, it is only in the ultimate stage of moral evolution, when the moral sense is fully developed, that the general well-being of society is necessarily regarded by men as the end of their actions. Before that period man may yet be egoistic, and is in fact, the more so, the lower his stage of evolution is. At present mankind is far from that ultimate perfection, and will be far from it for many centuries to come, the majority of men being yet on a lower degree of civilization and given up to egoistic

pursuits. It was, consequently, in all preceding ages, and is still to most men, not only not impossible, but rather quite natural, to disregard the common interests of society. Nay, it is scarcely possible for them to be otherwise than egoistic.

We must go yet farther. Life, considered as pleasurable, is of itself no end at all for man, and is rarely, if ever, apprehended by him as such, when his rational nature is fully developed. Sensuous appetition alone pursues pleasure as its proper end. But the rational will has for its object good as such, good supreme and unlimited. Delight is but the will's secondary object, yet not sensuous, but intellectual and spiritual delight. Hence the fact, as certain as remarkable, that the men most prominent for their moral greatness have despised the gratifications of this earthly life, and have, on the contrary, taken upon themselves the greatest sufferings and privations with the view to arise to eternal truth and goodness and to lift up others to the same height. They did not love and desire earthly existence for itself on account of its pleasantness, but looked on it as a way, beset with pains and labors, leading up to higher perfection.

Thus the first fundamental tenet of the new theories, the proposition that existence is a necessary end, proves, in whatever sense it is taken, utterly untenable.

120. Turn we now to the means which the hedonists assert to be necessary for the most necessary end. Sentient existence, they say, is maintained and heightened by pleasure. Hence the pursuit of the surplus of pleasure becomes bounden duty, in necessity second only to existence itself.

Pleasure stands in a twofold relation to life, whether sentient or intellectual. It is attendant on healthy and perfect vital actions, completing them as beauty adorns youth, and leads to perfect vital action, either prompting us as a motive, or inclining our faculties through habits generated in them. Neither the one nor the other consideration warrants the conclusion drawn by hedonists. Pleasure is not, as they say, the height of life. Attending our vital acts, it does not increase *pari passu* with life, as certainly it ought to do, if it determined the degree of vitality.

"In their evolutional rank," says Mr. J. Th. Bixby, "the snarling hyena and the lean and hungry wolf stand far above the fat porpoise and the gentle kangaroo. But there is little doubt that in mere happiness these lower forms have the advantage. The full-grown cat is undoubtedly more completely evolved than the young kitten. But the playful kitten, no doubt, has much more pleasure. . . . . There is a great probability that the savage of Tahiti or Samoa, lying under his bread-fruit tree, gets a greater and more unalloyed enjoyment from his life than the civilized European: and it is quite certain that our frolicsome children get far more pleasure from their budding and half-developed natures than we from the full-bloom of adult and civilized life." [6]

The reason thereof is very plain. With the development of our faculties our needs and desires are multiplied, and our sensibilities grow stronger. Evils, therefore, are not only known better and foreseen with more clearness and distinctness, but also felt more keenly. Labor, as life progresses, is increased, and entails fatigue and exhaustion; mental activity, which yields the highest enjoyments, weakens the nervous system; pleasure itself, if intense, or if long continued, becomes deleterious. Duties and re-

[6] The Crisis in Morals, p. 90.

sponsibilities grow heavier and more numerous. The taste grows more and more critical, aspirations become more exacting; the gap between our wishes and our power, between our duties and our tastes, between our theories and our belief, between our infinite passions and our finite capabilities, daily grows broader; and happiness becomes a more distant and inconstant goddess, more rarely coming forth as our wooing becomes more and more frantic.[7]

In the society in which the civilized man lives, as population increases, the struggle even for the necessaries of life grows fiercer; private interests are infinitely multiplied and interwoven; egoism, prompted by passions, grows in obstinacy and violence. In a word, as during this mortal life we are not fully, and most men are scarcely at all, adapted to a perfect intellectual life, the higher activities cannot but be attended with many evils, personal and social; and, generally, no step towards greater perfection can be taken without pain, revulsion, and sacrifice.

121. Nor can it be laid down as a general truth that pleasure preserves and increases existence, and pain destroys it. As a motive of action, pain, because felt more keenly, upon the whole exceeds pleasure in intensity. Beyond all doubt, men usually progress and improve under the pressure of the wants to which they are subject. It is stern necessity that stimulates all powers to exertion, that initiates and accomplishes great enterprises, that leads to useful and ingenious inventions. In every respect mankind owes its progress much more to sufferings endured than to pleasures enjoyed. Even according to the evolution-

[7] Crisis in Morals, p. 96.

ary theory, greater perfection is the outcome of the struggle for existence. As to the effects produced on our system, pleasure, as soon as it is immoderate or lasts for a long time, becomes hurtful; and it is nearly always attended with the danger of excessive indulgence. Pain, on the contrary, if not too intense, or not too long continued, strengthens our constitution; and our natural impulses will always strive to lessen its intensity and shorten its duration. Pleasure invites to enjoyment, and consequently generates habits which incline to ease and rest; pain stirs us up to activity, and, therefore, forms habits of activity; pleasure makes us disinclined to sacrifice and great exertion; pain accustoms us to labor, self-denial, and endurance.

We find these principles perfectly verified, also, in moral life. The men who, in the judgment of all, are prominently moral, are not exempt from sufferings in proportion to the greatness of their virtues. On the contrary, their keen perception of moral evil, and their strong aversion to it, their developed sympathies with others, their sensitive love of righteousness, renders them very susceptible even of the most intense pain. Their struggle with their passions, as well as their endeavors to assist others when in need, or to raise them to a higher standard of morality, entails on them self-denial, privations, contradictions, and persecutions. On the other hand, the wicked are not subject to miseries proportioned to their vices. The unprincipled know very well how to rid themselves of many a burden and many a restraint, and how to procure the gratification of their desires. Nor were the men adorned with great virtues and renowned

for their purity of life, for justice and uprightness, brought up in pleasure and luxury. Mostly, their characters were formed by labor and hardships and repeated sacrifices of self. By the contrary method, generally, vices have been fostered.

The proposition, therefore, does not hold that there is a necessary connection between the pursuit of pleasure and existence, even if existence were, as indeed it is not, a necessary end. For pleasure is not the only and the real reason that renders life desirable; nor does it determine the height of vitality; nor is it peculiar to it to stimulate and develop vital powers. Pain and pleasure, during our earthly existence, attend every degree of life, and both of them are necessary for its evolution.

122. There is, then, no conceivable binding necessity intrinsic to the hedonistic law of morality. But if law is devoid of such necessity, can we expect that the hedonists will, nevertheless, succeed in proving it to be sufficient to work on our will and to determine our conduct?

The binding force of moral precepts, they tell us, first presents itself in consciousness as the authority of complex feelings or social instincts, sustained by sanction or abstract duty. Let us see whether there exists any such authority strong enough to enforce all moral precepts, without exception.

From the preceding chapter we know that the authority of complex feelings, or social instincts, rests on their fitness to lead us to the enjoyment of greater pleasures, personal and social. This basis is, of course, not more solid nor better established than the necessity itself of the surplus of pleasure as a means to

preserve and increase existence, which necessity we have just proved to be unreal and imaginary. But, even though it were not so, even though pleasure were the height of vitality and the pursuit of it the only means to promote life, would it follow that higher feelings or social instincts have, in our consciousness, a decided authority as guides of conduct? We must emphatically deny it, and we must do so on the strength of the hedonistic and utilitarian theories themselves.

No sooner has Mr. Spencer established the supremacy of complex feelings than he comes to qualify it in a threefold way. "In the first place," he says, "the authority of the lower feelings as guides is by no means always inferior to the authority of the higher feelings, but is often superior." and, hence, he infers that the latter is by no means unlimited;[8] though, alleging for this assertion some good reasons taken from experience, he lays down no rule by which we might judge how far the limitation goes. Secondly, the higher or complex feelings can only then claim superiority, when they come into conflict with simple feelings. Hence, he arrives at the conclusion, that "the authority of the simple feelings, ordinarily less than that of the compound, but occasionally greater, is habitually to be accepted, when the compound do not oppose." Thirdly, a pleasure which is moral when remote, is also moral when proximate; wherefore simple feelings referring to pleasures of this kind are proper and lawful guides of conduct and have not to be subordinated. In short:

"The current conception (*that the simple feelings must be*

[8] Data of Ethics, § 43.

controlled by the compound), while it errs by implying that the authority of the higher over the lower is unlimited, errs also by implying that the rule of the lower must be resisted even when it does not conflict with the rule of the higher, and further errs by implying that a gratification which forms a proper aim if it is remote, forms an improper aim if it is proximate."[9]

Evidently, then, the authority of complex feelings as guides is by no means general. The simple feelings are lawful guides themselves and subject to no control in a multitude of cases so vast and so indefinite that it would scarcely be possible to determine whether guidance by the one or the other kind of feelings ought to be more frequent.

And whenever the compound feelings ought to guide our conduct, their superiority is by no means clearly established. They have to be obeyed, as Mr. Spencer says, only when simple feelings are in conflict with them. These cases are in his opinion very frequent. For, as he says, "life hourly sets the claims of present self against the claims of future self, and hourly brings the individual interests face to face with interests of other individuals, taken singly or associated."[10] If Mr. Spencer's rule holds good, we should, in all such cases, sacrifice the claims of present life to those of the future life, and personal interests to those of others, at least if associated; for the future self and the social interests are represented by complex, the present self and the personal interests by simple feelings. But he arrives at no such conclusion. No, there are compromises to be

[9] Data of Ethics, § 43. In § 46 Herbert Spencer limits the superior authority of the complex feelings only in those cases in which the simpler feelings are intense.

[10] Ibid., § 108.

made between society and the individual, between altruism and egoism, between the future and the present self, compromises which are but temporary, vague, indefinite, and often illogical. Yet, compromises, particularly such as just described, have not to be made between those to be controlled and those having supremacy. Compromises pre-suppose rights on either side and reduce the claims of either opponent. Even in conflict, then, the complex feelings have no real supremacy. They have to yield in part just as well as the simple feelings, and only if this is done, can rules be established for conduct during the lower stages of evolution.

Thus we see the supremacy of complex feelings undermined and reduced to nothingness, not by subtle argumentation of theistic philosophers, but by Mr. Spencer's own tenets.

123. Is the supremacy of the social instincts and sympathetic feelings better established on the utilitarian view? This certainly cannot be affirmed in general. There are many self-regarding actions, which need not and cannot be regulated by social instincts. Social life pre-supposes individual life and is based on it. The basis is not supported by the superstructure. Then, does not J. S. Mill himself grant that for most of our actions, in order to be moral, it suffices not to be injurious to our fellow-creatures, and that only few need regard the public welfare? To live altogether for others is the ideal perfection attainable only in the ultimate period of evolution; to make it for the present a general duty, he concedes, would be too exacting. Either, then, self-regarding actions are exempt from any law, or social

feelings and instincts have no general authority. Mr. Bain exempts conduct, as far as it is self-regarding, from any higher control; but such a view is too plainly repugnant to reason and to conscience. It will, therefore, be necessary to subject private conduct to some rule.

Charles Darwin, indeed, teaches that it must be regulated by the stronger self-regarding impulses.

But have the social feelings and instincts, at least with respect to altruistic actions, a real and uncontestable authority as guides? What should entitle them to it? In A. Comte's opinion, the constitution of the human organism. Borrowing all his psychological and physiological views from J. Gall's phrenology, he thinks that the organs of affection exceed those of the understanding both in number and in volume, and, therefore, he concludes that in conduct also the sympathetic feeling should prevail over egoistic reason. Yet modern physiology has disproved Gall's statement concerning the organs of appetition, and sound philosophy has still more repudiated his entire phrenological system as utterly materialistic. The utilitarians generally assign as the reason for the supremacy of social instincts their conduciveness to social happiness. Undoubtedly, in gregarious animals, as, for instance, in bees, ants, beavers, instincts universally lead to a pleasant existence. But this does not hold in regard to human feelings and sympathies.

Brutes are from their birth necessarily determined by their instincts to certain lines of action, and hence it is that those belonging to the same species all have the same habits and follow the same manner of life. In men we observe the contrary. Though having the

same innate tendencies, they widely differ in their conduct; though social by their very nature, they may, and often do, disturb the peace of society and most cruelly injure even such as are nearest allied to them. The reason of this phenomenon, observed everywhere and in all ages, is not that in man social instincts and tendencies are weaker than in brutes, or that they will sufficiently develop only in the time to come. For man is higher in perfection than any brute. The real cause is that, while irrational creation is under necessity and cannot but obey its innate instincts and tendencies, man is free and may follow or resist his inborn propensities. Yet, if such is the nature of man, not his instincts, whether egoistic or altruistic, are supreme in him, but his own free will, and consequently not they have authority to guide him, but a higher power that may command his will to act, though with freedom, in accordance with the right order.

But to what purpose argue any longer against the supremacy of feelings or instincts as guides of conduct, if it is a tenet of hedonistic morals that their authority must be sustained by external coercion or by the consequences of action? Does not the need of support from without plainly suppose intrinsic insufficiency? But has it, even when thus supported, power enough to determine human conduct? To know this, we must search into the strength of these supports themselves.

124. According to Mr. Spencer's theory, the external sanctions, which first enforce subordination of simple feelings, consist in vengeance, legal punishment, divine anger, and social reprobation. Divine

anger is, of course, in his opinion, only imaginary. As he tells us, the thought of a god originated when the ghost of a mighty chieftain was seen in nightly dreams. The phantom was taken by the stupid savage for reality, and fear was entertained that the deceased ruler, yet living somewhere, though invisible, would, if not obeyed, take dire revenge. With the progress of civilization, the many ghosts dreamt of were reduced to one by abstraction, and the idea of the one developed into that of an all-powerful, all-governing deity. It is astonishing how Mr. Spencer, admired as the apostle of the understanding, could use such language in the face of all the Christian ages before him, and the Christian nations among which he lives; in the face of the most firm convictions entertained by mankind with regard to the personal Deity; in the face of all the philosophical and theological works written by the greatest geniuses, to explain the nature of the Self-existent Being, to prove its existence and trace its action in the visible universe; in the face of the good which the knowledge and the love of God has done, and the strength which Christian morals derive from Him as the highest good, the supreme Lawgiver and Judge.

125. However, this is not the main question at issue. The support first given to the authority of higher feelings is, according to him, merely external compulsion. The savages have no other than physical power over one another, nor do they need more than the strength of their arms to take revenge when they feel themselves hurt. The ruler himself rests his authority on main force, which, even when he is dead, affects the imagination of the weaker.

Social reprobation is dreaded just as far as it is sufficient to inflict harm. In truth, Mr. Spencer is perfectly right when he says that these restraints are no moral motives. But he is greatly mistaken when he thinks that they are at least powerful enough to found society and to initiate truly moral control. Merely external compulsion may at any time be resisted. The chieftain is more powerful than the individual members of the tribe. But their united power exceeds his by far. They can and may unite against him, if he is upheld only by his own physical force and by no superior authority; and, being social and at the same time desirous of unrestrained freedom, they will certainly unite as gregarious animals do against an enemy. If they do not fear to resist the chieftain living, will they dread him when he is dead?

Individual vengeance is still more apt to produce general disorder and bloodshed instead of social harmony. Reprobation by public opinion is as weak and unsteady as the rule of the chieftain. The multitude that exercises it is as yet actuated only by selfish and passionate impulses, and is, generally, governed by few leaders who are more powerful and more daring than others. Hence it will never be unanimous in judgment, it will be always changing and be tossed to and fro by strifes and factions, it will promote the interests rather of a party than of the whole. The multitude cannot effect the unity which it lacks itself, or the order, peace, and steadiness to which the egoistic tendencies of its components are opposed. In vain do we expect help from the universal perception of the need of social order. For the perceiving of such a need presupposes well-developed complex

feelings, having a control already firmly established; it presupposes what, in the opinion of the hedonists, is to be initiated by external sanction.

126. It might seem that the utilitarian system is not open to these objections. Society, it is said, has full authority over its members, as the whole has power over its parts, being bound effectively to order them to the common welfare, after the manner in which the organism regulates the functions of all faculties, and renders them subservient to the well-being of the entire body. Wherefore, obedience to society becomes a real duty, supported by moral motives. This utilitarian view would be of great weight, if society were in fact a real organism and did not merely bear some resemblance to it. While in a real body no organ has complete existence in itself and independent action, every individual is in himself complete, a person and perfect principiant of operation; and while all parts of a physical organism, being incomplete in themselves, are made to pursue with combined forces one and the self-same end, and, therefore, can only act dependently on one another and in harmony with the whole living body, there corresponds to every individual a peculiar end, to be pursued with full self-determination in accordance with his own nature, and to be embraced by his own personal acts. Association is not the ultimate end of human nature. Its only end and purpose is to afford such means conducive to our destiny as individuals cannot procure to themselves by their several efforts. Human society, therefore, not being really an organism, does not determine its members in their thoughts and actions by an internal influence,

nor is it sufficient of itself to lay them under moral necessity. It exercises power over them only from without, and necessitates them to certain lines of action not otherwise than by external compulsion. If man, endowed with free will, is, as the utilitarians suppose, independent of a supra-mundane cause and ruler, he may act according to his own pleasure in the pursuance of his ultimate end, and cannot be prevented from doing so but by main force either of tyrannical governments or of a powerful multitude. In fact, those who with A. Bain think that morality is at first an institution of society, do not know any other means to enforce it than legal punishment.

127. Then, the utilitarian theory supposes society consolidated in morality previously to the individuals. But whence has society become moral? This question is not solved by the assertion of the positivists that morality is not to be predicated of society, but of its members only. Rulers, majorities, the parliament of humanity, either may ordain whatever they please, or must keep within certain limits and follow certain standards. If they may ordain whatever they please, then the utmost tyranny is justified, and actions which reason condemns as most abominable become good and virtuous at their bidding. If they must keep within certain limits, then they are themselves subject to a higher law, and their injunctions are moral or immoral according as they are conformable or repugnant to it. Society, to moralize its members, must be moral itself. How can it, without being actuated by the love of good, uphold the right order, or without knowing and desiring what is just, enforce justice, or without being disinterested, render

others beneficent? The cause must precontain the effect. Without morality society cannot even exist. How could it be built up and prosper without regard for rights, without mutual love and confidence, without truthfulness, without submission on the part of the subjects and equity on the part of rulers?

The mistake made by utilitarianism is plain. Society ought to bring morality into being among its members, and it ought, consequently, to be itself moral. But there is no source conceivable whence it might derive this quality, no cause that could bestow the same on it. Nay, there is in the utilitarian supposition no possibility at all of its being moral. How could it be so, if the members of which it consists, and out of which it grows, are low, selfish, vicious, and must themselves be trained to morality? If the inhabitants of a country are lewd and intemperate, and bent on violence and robbery, will the commonwealth, or society, be chaste and temperate, peaceful and just? If all the parts are corrupt, can the whole be sound?

The utilitarians would fain escape the perplexity in which they are by saying that the social instincts build up society and guide it in enacting good and just laws. But this is a vicious circle. Because instincts are not sufficient to exercise the moral control, society is deemed necessary, both to develop social sympathies and to enforce by its law the rules of right conduct. But again because society is not competent for the task allotted to it and cannot even exist without a moral basis and support, the social sympathies are called in to prop it up, to give it vigor and organization. That the social instincts

are, in reality, not sufficient to exercise moral control or enforce morality follows from the fact, already hinted at above, that man is not at all necessitated by them, but obeys or disobeys them as he pleases. That they are insufficient to build up society is patent from obvious experiences. Do not men, following their social sympathies, sometimes associate for the very purpose of undermining well-ordered society, or of resisting just laws? Do not murderers and robbers enter into alliance, in order to destroy the life and property of others? Are not associations formed for the end of promoting private interests to the open disadvantage of public welfare, peace and security? We need but recall to mind the Mafia and Camorra actually existing in Italy.

And how much evil do men inflict on one another in spite of their social instincts even in highly cultivated society? What hatred often disunites even those who are closely allied? To what oppression and misery is not a great portion of mankind subject, mostly in consequence of the selfishness of the more powerful? How much human blood is shed on battlefields, not only in international but also in civil wars? It is, therefore, a fundamental mistake to trace back the primary support of morality to society. It is as great a mistake as if we were to derive the laws of elementary forces from those of the universe.

128. The first support, then, devised for the authority of complex feelings and social instincts proves inefficient and unreal. We are warranted to infer at once that the second support, the natural or intrinsic effects of action, is likewise powerless. For any sub-

sequent stage of evolution rests on the preceding and develops from it. That in particular the intrinsic effects of action can form a motive of conduct only after the extrinsic effects, the political, religious and social sanctions, have founded society and to some degree cultivated man, has been set forth at full length by Mr. Spencer. No tree will grow from a dead root.

Nevertheless, let us inquire into the motive power intrinsic to the natural consequences of action. We may be brief; for we have already shown that they constitute no perfect and sufficient sanction for the moral law. Earthly prosperity does not attend virtue universally and to such a degree as to be a reward proportionate to the sacrifices made for it; and vice is not generally followed here on earth by its due punishment; it is, on the contrary, often the less visited by temporal afflictions, the ranker and the more inveterate it is. The wealth, the luxury, the high position, the success in commercial or political enterprises, the health, the mental acquirements of a vast multitude of such as are evidently unjust, corrupt, lustful, selfish; and *vice versâ* the poverty, the privations, the mental and bodily sufferings, the abandonment, the untimely death of a yet greater host of peaceful, patient, charitable, loyal persons are facts universally known. Human experience does not give evidence to the rigorous punishment of vice by natural consequences. Moreover, there are, under many circumstances, as, for instance, in the time of war or of epidemic diseases, or in public dangers, many actions prescribed by the moral law which involve the immediate sacrifice of our exist-

ence: and many more actions are daily required by duty which are so laborious, exhaustive, or dangerous as to consume human life within a comparatively short time, whereas cowardice, injustice, unfaithfulness, neglect of duty would prolong it and render it enjoyable. Clearly, in all such cases, the consequences of action during our earthly existence do not uphold guidance by higher motives.

And how does Mr. Spencer's theory inspire patience and endurance? No moral duty is of higher and more universal importance. The greater part of mankind are dragging out their existence in a state of suffering without their fault. They are told to suffer patiently. But what earthly profit do they derive from patience? The sick are not restored by it to health, nor are the poor and miserable rescued by it from wretchedness. On the strength of Spencerian ethics, they must arrive at quite different conclusions. If man is made only for earthly happiness, and if by the prospect of it he must regulate his conduct, why should not the sick, deprived of hope of recovery, and the poor and the disgraced, when their condition cannot be bettered, instead of suffering patiently, put an end to their existence? Or why should not others do them this service? Life is valueless for them—death would be a gain, conformably with their destiny. And why should not those who spend their days in labor and hardships, scarcely able to earn for themselves and their families the necessaries of a wretched life, and much more those who are not granted even this benefit, instead of enduring their condition, unite and attack the strongholds of wealth and comfort, to bring about an equal division of earthly goods?

Their happiness, which is that of the majority of mankind, would thus be considerably promoted.

129. Mr. Spencer would indignantly protest against representing his theory as fraught with such evil consequences. The complex feelings, he tells us, essentially refer to the general and more remote effects of action. It is, therefore, this kind of effects that is meant to sustain their authority as guides, and that, taken for a motive, will always lead to right conduct. Let us see whether his cause is saved by this explanation. Mr. Spencer certainly cannot mean that remote and general effects alone should be motives of action. For the complex or higher feelings, as we have seen above, have no general authority. Even when they come into conflict with the simpler and lower feelings, their supremacy is not certain and absolute, since the claims of the present and the future self, of the individual and of society, must be reconciled by a vague and temporary compromise. He even expressly teaches that, both in the present and in the ideal or complete life, conduct must be regulated by immediate as well as remote effects of action. Concerning our present life, yet incomplete and transitional, he lays down the following maxim:

"If the purpose of ethical inquiry is to establish rules of right living, and if the rules of right living are those of which the total results, individual and general, direct and indirect, are most conducive to human happiness, then it is absurd to ignore the immediate results and recognize only the remote results." [11]

Concerning perfect morality in complete life he says:

"Along with complete adjustment of humanity to the social state will go recognition of the truths that actions are com-

[11] Data of Ethics, § 37.

pletely right only when, besides being conducive to future happiness, special and general, they are immediately pleasurable; and that painfulness, not only ultimate, but proximate, is the concomitant of actions which are wrong." [12]

Does not all this imply that general and remote effects are often not the motive and the rule of right living, and that, also, when they are, their weight and moment is counteracted and reduced by the special and immediate effects? There is between these two opposite kinds of effects a composition to be brought about in the same manner as compromises are to be made between the opposite claims of the present and the future self, and between self and society. And as the compromise between the latter, so must the composition between the former be vague, indefinite, varying with time, place, and environment, with the character of individuals and the degree of evolution attained by each and all. As a consequence, there will always be uncertainty as to the extent in which immediate gratifications ought to be sacrificed, and remote results ought to be preferred, in order to realize the greatest surplus of pleasure possible under given circumstances. In this uncertainty, unquestionably, not disinterestedness, but egoistic passions and personal needs, demanding immediate satisfaction, will gain the upper hand, and will gain it without much remorse of conscience. Not even in the most momentous questions will it be possible to secure the preponderance of remote over immediate consequences.

130. Besides the importance objectively attached to effects, we must take into consideration, also, the

[12] Data of Ethics, § 39.

impression which forethought concerning them is apt to make on the human agent. The general and remote consequences of action are not so distinctly and so vividly represented in the mind as the personal and the immediate; and while the latter are usually certain and unavoidable, the former are very often uncertain and avoidable. Hence we are much more forcibly prompted to action by the prospect of a present, than by that of a future advantage. To renounce the immediate for the distant good will always be a sacrifice, which, upon the whole, will not be made unless the good we hope for greatly exceed in value that which we have to give up; and even in this supposition a degree of self-control is necessary which is acquired slowly, and only by a very limited number. In like manner must we judge of the goods of a higher and intellectual order. By their bodily constitution, men are strongly inclined to sensual gratifications, insomuch that there are comparatively few who overcome their sensuous tendencies and appetites and rise in spite of them to lofty aspirations. Consistently with the materialistic view, in which man is regarded only as organic and as devoid of an immaterial soul, the lower propensities must be unconquerable in strength. Upon the whole, then, the remote and general effects are the weaker motives, and they are such particularly in the supposition that we are made only for earthly happiness.

131. But even granted that, under special circumstances and conditions, they prevail in weight and power, they cannot render a certain line of action necessary, as they ought to do, if they have to sustain the authority of higher feelings. If man is a law

unto himself, if he is supreme and independent, as he is supposed to be by Mr. Spencer, he is under no authority and under no power whatever that could make it a duty or a necessity for him to renounce the present for the future enjoyment, or personal for general well-being. He is for his choice amenable to nobody, and is, in whatever he does, absolutely independent. He is also the only competent judge of what is good and befitting for himself. He knows best what, considering the degree of the evolution he has attained, his tastes, habits and propensities, his health and bodily constitution, his social relations, his hopes and fears, is most conducive to his happiness. Who will blame him for the line of action he resolves upon after these considerations? And if anybody should blame him, what weight may disapproval have? Very appropriately says Mr. Mallock:

"If a man (to use an example of Mr. Mill's) preferred to be a contented pig rather than a discontented Socrates, we should have no positive reason for thinking him wrong; did we think so, we should have no motive for telling him so; even if we told him, we should have no means of convincing him."[13]

132. The utilitarians seem to be well aware of the insufficiency of moral sanction by the results which action has for the agent himself. The author of "The Value of Life" plainly confesses:

"Positivism does not feel warranted in asserting that every man will always realize the consequence of his own actions, or even will always be punished for them in his own person."[14]

They, therefore, regard the consequences of action for society as the most efficient motive for moral conduct. The damage done or the pains caused to wife

[13] Is Life Worth Living? p. 92. See, also, pp. 118, 119.

[14] P. 191.

or husband, to children, relations, companions, to the state or nation, and even to distant posterity, are, in their opinion, the most powerful deterrents from wrong-doing; and the delight enjoyed in relieving the misfortune of others or in promoting their mental and moral elevation, the highest reward that can be expected and the most sublime inducement to righteousness. Adopting this view, they think they have evaded all the inconsistencies of egoistic hedonism. Whether they have or not will be immediately apparent.

In the course of our discussion we have repeatedly seen that conduct cannot be regulated by the regard of public welfare alone, since individual is prior to public life. On this account it will be necessary for them just as well as for Herbert Spencer to reconcile the claims of self and of society. Will they arrive at a compromise which is not like his, vague, indefinite, and varying, or which is plainly in favor of altruism? They have not as yet solved this problem in any way, and strong reasons compel us to think that they will never solve it satisfactorily and consistently with their own tenets. If man is but an organic being like the brute, and can desire nothing but the pleasurable, he is essentially and pre-eminently egoistic.

Nor do the consequences of action regarding society generally make a stronger impression than those regarding self. Self is always nearer to the agent than the fellow-creature. Every one is, therefore, naturally more interested in his own than in others' well-being. True, if the existence of society, or the preservation of the species is in question, or the life of those dearest to us is at stake, the social and sympathetic feelings gain ascendency over self-

interest, and often inspire a wonderful heroism. But these are extraordinary events. Under ordinary circumstances personal enjoyments and advantages are generally nearer at heart and solicit the will more strongly than those of others. In any case forgetfulness of self implies sacrifice.

All these difficulties beset the utilitarian theories over and above those which have been urged against egoistic hedonism. For what was said against the latter tells equally against the former. The effects of action on society are distant, general, often uncertain, and, therefore, not distinctly and vividly represented in the mind. Nor can they, of themselves, lay under any physical or moral necessity him who, though a member of society, is a complete and independent principiant of action, a person destined for an end corresponding to his own individual nature. If man is subject to no divine or supramundane law, there is absolutely no necessity conceivable that could bind him to regulate his free actions, not by the consequences he foresees for himself, but by those they may have for others. Utilitarianism not only does not avoid the incongruities of egoistic hedonism, but rather incurs still greater absurdities.

133. The perplexity in which they are is very well understood by the utilitarians. They grant that the social effects of action do not enforce duty but where the moral sense is fully developed.

"The sanction," says J. S. Mill, "as far as it is disinterested, is always in the mind itself." "The force he (*man*) is really urged by is his own subjective feeling and is exactly measured its strength."[15]

[15] Utilitarianism, chap. iii.

If, then, a man is selfish, cruel, ungrateful, a slave to his passions, he is beyond the reach of moral sanction. The consequences which vice has for himself are, as is conceded, not sufficient to deter him from sinful gratifications, and the consequences which it has for society constitute no motive at all for him. Thus, while strict sanction is exercised on the virtuous, the wicked, who are most in need of control, are left without restraints. The conclusion to be drawn is that full freedom is given to vice, but the rise and growth of virtue is rendered impossible. For in the beginning of human existence all men are supposed to be selfish savages, and all, therefore, free from restraints. It has been said in reply that the theist who has stifled his conscience or lost his belief in eternal punishment is just as free and unrestrained, according to Christian ethics, as the wicked egoist is according to the utilitarian theory. But this is not so. The wicked egoist, in the utilitarian view, escapes retribution not only in thought, but also in reality; the theist who has uprooted his firmest convictions and vitiated rational nature in himself, may imagine to sin with impunity, but in reality he will, according to the teaching of Christian ethics, incur the severest penalties decreed by Divine Justice.

Then let us bear in mind that the consequences as an efficient moral motive derive their strength from the moral sense and that, *vice versâ*, the moral sense is not fully developed but in the ultimate stage of evolution, after external coercion and natural results of conduct have, for an indefinite length of time, worked on man, and after well-ordered society has

brought out his social sympathies to full perfection. Here, again, utilitarianism moves in a vicious circle. The moral sense is made at once the cause and the effect of the moral restraints consisting in the consequences of action. Again, the moral feeling is made to spring from a source to which it gives existence and power; again, morality is based on society, and society on morality.

The effects of conduct, then, do not prove a sufficient support of the moral law. Whether special or general, whether immediate or remote, they enforce no moral rule, restrain no passion or strong desire, give no effective impulse towards righteousness and integrity. In a word, they generate no necessity, either physical or moral, of doing right and of avoiding wrong. Nor do they, consequently, sustain the authority of complex or higher feelings and social instincts, which are thought to give support to the right order in private and social life, and so to lead all to special and general happiness. Both feelings and instincts must, therefore, be understood to be guides without power and authority.

134. Bearing this conclusion in mind, we know how we have to judge of abstract obligation. Mr. Spencer has not failed to analyze its conception. Obligation, as he says, is the element common to all particular feelings vested with authority to guide our conduct; it is the complexity of our feelings accompanied with external coercion, because these two elements are common to all leading moral motives; it is, as he concludes, a generalization or an abstraction, given by our mind an illusive independence.[16]

[16] Data of Ethics, § 46.

If all particular feelings, even when sustained by political, religious and social sanction, and by the consequences of action, can assert no authority, undoubtedly the element common to all of them must be impotent. Much less can it have any authority of its own, if, as he says, it has no real, but only an imaginary independence, created by thought. Nor can the abstract sentiment of duty, corresponding to the general idea of obligation, exercise any influence on the will. Obligation is, as Mr. Spencer says, generalized only in a state of advanced civilization. Shall we believe it to be possible that cultured men, in consequence of some vague sentiment, will ever choose mere abstractions and generalizations of feelings for authoritative guides of their actions, while reason proves them to be destitute of all authority? Moral views and ideas which are wholly of artificial creation must, by degrees, as intellectual culture goes on, yield to the dissolving force of analysis.

135. To sum up the result of our discussion, law is found to be absolutely incompatible with independent morality, as set forth by agnostic and positive philosophy. The cause in which law originates, the Supreme Reason, is denied. Moral precepts are an impossibility, since right conduct, ever varying as it is, has become indefinable. Obligation has wholly faded away, the necessity of certain lines of action being altogether ungrounded. For human existence cannot be regarded as a necessary end, particularly if it is desirable only in so far as it is pleasurable; nor is there a necessary connection between existence and right action, if right action is but the

pursuit of pleasure. Complex feelings and social instincts, which are said to direct our conduct to complete existence or to happiness as man's ultimate end, have no authority as guides. Neither is any supremacy inherent in them, because simple feelings and self-regarding sympathies rightfully prevail over them, or compel them to enter into a vague, temporary compromise; nor is sufficient strength given to them from without by human laws and sanctions, or by the consequences of action. For human nature being supposed to be supreme and subject to no Creator, man can exercise on man a necessitating influence in no other way than by sheer coercion. Even society has over its members no other power than that of main force. But compulsion is not authority creating moral obligation. The natural consequences of good or evil conduct are neither a sufficient nor a universal sanction of the moral order, and much less do they, by being foreseen, bring the will into subjection or demand its absolute submission. They have no such sway, even if their bearing on society is taken into account. Duty in general is of still less efficacy, since it is made up of nonentities, fictions, and barren abstractions.

Law is undone by the theory of independent morality. What is left of it is only a specious semblance, like the *ignis fatuus*, which, when approached, dissolves into poisonous vapors.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MORAL SENSE.

136. The moral sense is looked on by the new moralists as the most perfect law, which, when obligation ceases, will elevate man to the highest morality and at the same time establish him in absolute independence.

137. The moral sense, as described by the new theories, has no existence, all the causes from which it is thought to develop being impotent.

138. It cannot develop from them, even though the laws of survival and of heredity be called to its aid. Experience does not show that the good survive and the wicked succumb.

139. Virtues are not transmitted by heredity, but merely some predispositions for them, which generally are but faint, and require careful culture ; passions, however, and evil propensities are transmitted in full vigor and easily develop into vices.

140. Even if the hedonistic moral sense had existence, it would not be a law leading man to ultimate perfection. The moral principles which it implies have no authority, sacredness and necessity.

141. Their descent from remote antiquity cannot, consistently with the evolutionary view, give them authority, but rather proves their baseness ; and their registration in our organism gives them only an illusory objective necessity.

142. The new theories attempt to make moral conduct a psychological, physical and biological necessity.

143. But thus they render morality irrational and pervert the moral sense into a ruling passion.

144. The moral law of Christian ethics is not yet superseded : it stands firm and unshaken.

136. THE moral law being undone, it would seem that the moral order, too, must necessarily be overthrown. Are not lawlessness and disorder one and the self-same thing? The lack of definite moral precepts and the inefficacy of obligation is more or less conceded by the evolutionary philosophers. Mr. Spencer, as we have seen, grants that, before the climax of evolution is reached, laws must be imperfect, vague and inconsistent; and, in J. S. Mill's opinion, no external sanction, whether social or natural, is sufficient to enforce morality. But the overthrow of the moral order, as a necessary consequence, is most emphatically denied by both.

Besides external precepts and sanctions, there is, as they say, another superior cause at work within ourselves—the moral sense. Developing from the lower degrees of moral life, it grows into a law inherent in human nature—a law so perfect, so definite, and so powerful, that finally it elevates man to the sublimest morality at the same time that it establishes him in absolute independence. Of this moral sense, called by others the moral faculty or conscience, we have yet to say a few words before we terminate our discussion on the new moral law.

137. First, has the moral sense, as described by the new philosophy, any real existence? Cogent reasons compel us to answer in the negative. No effect can come into existence from insufficient causes—from causes which are unreal or impotent. But from causes of this kind the moral sense is supposed to be derived. The moral sense implies principles, emotions and habits. The principles are either generalizations of past experiences as to the ways and means conducive

to happiness, or according to Mr. Spencer, fundamental intuitions arising from the modifications which long-continued and accumulated experience has brought about in the nervous system. The emotions are necessary consequences of the perception of principles, and consist in pleasure or pain, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, internal approval or remorse. The habits are a second or acquired nature, constituting strong inclinations to certain lines of conduct. These are the elements composing the mass of feeling which cannot be broken through, and which, identified with man himself, makes good a necessity for him.

Evidently the principles and the emotions consequent on them result from the experience of the individual and of the race, from habits or from good actions which moral restraints and constant control have made a custom. But if the good is relative and variable, no moral principle can ever result from experience, however long-continued it may be. General moral truths cannot be gathered from it by induction, nor can certain forms of intuition be generated by it in the human mind. It lacks that uniformity which is pre-required for generalization, and it still more lacks that absolute necessity and supreme authority which is peculiar to moral principles. Nor are there moral restraints and controls which could make good actions a steady custom, and so generate virtuous habits. Social, political and religious sanctions, the natural consequences of action foreseen or already experienced, duty or obligation in general, have been pointed out as moral restraints. Yet they all have been proved to be insufficient to enforce the moral order, unauthoritative, and inferior in strength to hu-

man passions and egoistic tendencies. All the causes to which the moral sense is attributed as an effect, are altogether impotent. We must, consequently, infer that it does not exist at all. This conclusion is in full accordance with the evolutionary doctrine. Every higher stage of evolution rests on the lower, and is the necessary outcome of it. If, therefore, the lower is unreal, the higher cannot come into being.

138. The hedonists try to evade the argument. It is not necessary, they rejoin, that experience and restraints exercise a general influence from the very beginning of human existence; it suffices that, through their agency, a few at first are mentally and morally improved, which, as a matter of fact, cannot be doubted. The few improved, being more social and better adapted to the conditions of existence, will survive and transmit their views and habits to an ever-increasing posterity; while the rest will, little by little, be exterminated, as in all the realms of nature the less-fitted are doomed to disappear in the long run. Thus, by the survival of the fittest and the law of heredity, the moral sense is gradually developed and is gaining ever-wider sway over the human race.

The dying out of the wicked must be extremely slow—so slow, indeed, that in the course of historical ages it cannot be noticed at all, nay, that in our own days rather the reverse seems to be a palpable fact. Certainly in this regard the evolutionary theory is not verified by experience; and yet experience is, according to it, the only test of truth. This is, however, the least objection that presents itself against the rejoinder of the evolutionists. There are positive

reasons which prove the growth of the moral sense by natural selection to be an utter impossibility.

In the struggle for earthly existence, the virtuous are decidedly at a disadvantage, insomuch that, as long as only natural laws and agencies are at work, they will, if not altogether eliminated, always be only a small minority. Not the unjust, but the just, abstain from accumulating wealth by fraud and oppression, and from forestalling even the necessaries of life; not the selfish and the cowardly, but the magnanimous and the courageous, expose themselves to danger or spend all they have for the common welfare; not pleasure-seekers, but the frugal and the continent, restrain their desires for earthly comfort and enjoyments. Then, there has always been in the world a struggle between good and evil. In this, the virtuous have not been the persecutors; on the contrary, they have been persecuted even to death, mercilessly and irrespectively of right and justice. Let us go back in mind to the early times of pre-human and human existence, as supposed by the evolutionists. Savage life was then universally prevailing; no idea of right or of the social order was conceived; no beauty of virtue shone forth; no charity mitigated the violence of low passions. Could, under such circumstances, the incipient moral dispositions, restraining man from wrong and from undue gratifications, rise, develop, and spread? And, if so, could they be conducive to success and victory, and, on this account, survive? The following consideration is well-grounded.

"If an unprejudiced mind considers how intensely difficult it is, even at the present day when we are in possession of all the moralizing agencies of religion, education, language, liter-

ature, public opinion, and governmental authority, to quicken the moral sensibility of the individual or the nation, he must surely see that in the alleged pre-human stage, when not a single one of these forces were yet present, and when the conditions of existence combined unanimously in the opposite direction, the natural growth of conscience must have been absolutely impossible."[1]

139. As natural selection does not cause the rise and growth, so the laws of heredity do not aid the transmission of the moral sense. Knowledge, views, intuitions do not descend from ancestors to posterity, nor do arts and fully developed habits. Nobody has ever been born an accomplished mathematician, musician, painter, or philosopher. There are predispositions and inclinations, which may be and often are inherited; yet, in order to spring into perfect operation, or grow into actual skill or knowledge, they must be cultivated by training, education, study, long-continued practice, which being neglected, the offspring of the best and most learned parent remains rude and ignorant. Scientists have well explained this phenomenon.

"Heredity, as Professor Bascom points out, is a law of the organic realm and operates in organic structures; and modifications, however great, like artificial disablement, that do not work into physiological structure, do not transmit themselves. The more conscious and voluntary our acquisitions are, the less they are transmitted by heredity."[2]

There is no reason whatsoever why moral intuitions and virtues should be more easily transmitted than other knowledge and other habits, or why they should be transmitted in a different manner and according to a different law. On the contrary, A.

[1] M. Maher, S. J., Psychology (Stonyhurst Series), p. 327.
[2] J. T. Bixby, The Crisis in Morals, pp. 175, 176.

Bain forcibly argues that the moral sentiment is about the least favorably situated among all mental products for transmission by heredity. The chief grounds on which he rests his opinion are the comparative infrequency of special classes of moral acts, men being moralists only at long intervals and often tearing up an inceptive custom by contrary acts; the disagreeableness of duty which prevents us from readily acquiring good habits; the inborn passions and propensities which run counter to virtue and render its acquisition slow and, upon the whole, imperfect. This goes to show, not that moral views and habits themselves are generally inherited in a low degree, but that even the predispositions and inclinations to moral sentiments and virtues, if transmitted at all, are but faint. Experience coincides. Not to mention how frequent moral degeneracy is, notwithstanding the excellence of parents and ancestors, everybody knows that virtuous habits require a more careful training and greater efforts than mental culture, and are more easily undone than any other accomplishment.

Natural selection, then, and heredity are in vain resorted to in the present question. They do not promote the growth of the moral sense; in many respects they rather hinder it. The propensities to vice are just as well inherited as the inclination to virtue, and even more regularly, because they are more deeply rooted in human nature and are much stronger. In addition, moral goodness is rather an impediment than an aid to success in the struggle for earthly existence.

No other cause is left or is alleged by the evolu-

tionists that might give rise to moral principles and habits, to a mass of moral feeling that cannot be resisted. We must accordingly conclude that the moral sense has no existence, that it is altogether imaginary, an inconsistent fiction.

140. This is the first conclusion we arrive at in the present question. But granted, for the sake of argument, that the moral sense, as described by the hedonists, has existence, and that it is produced in the manner which they point out, it must, in the second place, be denied that it can be conceived as the moral law laying man under a sacred necessity, and leading him to ultimate perfections.

The rules and principles which, in consequence of permanent association of thought and of changes in the nervous system, are transmitted to posterity remain accumulated experience and involve no other than social and natural restraints. Like the latter, they are devoid of any overmastering power, and, like other experiences of utility, they are neither necessary truths, nor are they sacred and authoritative. Not being higher in rank than other inductive conclusions concerning the useful, they even cease to constitute an order of their own. Quite pertinent is Mr. Bixby's remark:

"It may be asked, if social approbation and disapprobation, accumulated and transmitted by heredity, becomes moral intuition, why have not customs like the (*not?*) eating of pork among Hebrews and Mussulmans, or the veiling of women in Oriental countries, which all these same forces of heredity, association, and social displeasure have now for generations been working on, been transformed into innate moral intuitions as sacred as justice, and as sure to reappear in a youth with this hereditarily tinged blood in him (no matter what other society

or civilization he should be reared in) as any of the moral perceptions?" [3]

In reply it cannot be said that principles and habits, not considered as moral, have no regard to universal or social welfare. For many of those principles, as, for instance, the laws of political economy, directly concern public welfare, and many of the habits, as, for instance, sciences and arts, both liberal and mechanical, highly contribute to the well-being not only of the nation, but of the whole of mankind.

141. Several attempts have been made on the part of evolutionary philosophers to defend the necessity and sacredness of the moral intuitions and habits acquired by accumulated experience and heredity. They are, it is said, sacred and authoritative on account of the immense duration of time during which they were being formed, and of the high antiquity from which they have come down to us. Nothing can be more inconsistent with the evolutionary theory than such a view. The leading moral sentiments were all the lower, all the more imperfect and unholy, the more remote the times were in which they originated.

"The feelings," says Mr. Bixby, "that, according to Mr. Spencer, are the primitive and ancient ones, are the animal impulses and egoistic sentiments, warlike passions, hate of the stranger, sensual appetites, and promiscuous gratifications of the lusts of the body—precisely, in short, the feelings and habits to which we do *not* assign any virtuous character at all, but in great part the reverse." [4]

It is further urged that moral intuitions, resulting from the structure of the mind, must involve universal and unchangeable necessity. Can such necessity

[3] J. T. Bixby, The Crisis in Morals, p. 178. [4] Ibid., p. 170.

in reality result from the mind, which, as the evolutionists say, constantly changes with the environment, with the advance of civilization, with age, with character, and personal acquirements? It is hardly conceivable. And even if it could result, what would it be? A merely subjective necessity, not an objective one, as it is universally regarded. But a merely subjective necessity, taken for an objective one, is a delusion, just as the appearance of colors which are attributed to morbid affections of the eyes is illusive, and as space and time, if they were but innate forms of our sensibility projected on the bodies, would be unrealities. This illusion, by which duties and rules of conduct are presented to us as an absolute objective necessity, could not, with the progress of mental culture, remain undiscovered. In fact, the new philosophers profess to have discovered it already. But a seeming necessity, when once discovered to be illusive, can no longer have a binding force for man. It may, when first discovered, perhaps for a time perplex the enlightened agent, like an apprehension or an optic deception; but it needs only to be courageously counteracted and it will soon disappear and no longer hamper freedom of action. Very well says Mr. Bixby:

"When men shall have been instructed in the new ethics, and have firmly adopted it, their delusion will be turned to a conscious one. The voice of conscience will still, for a time at least, ... speak within the breast. Remorse will still gnaw the heart of the transgressor. But will these illusions then be likely to retain their vividness and power when it is discovered that they are not true representations of present realities, but results of certain nervous derangements transmitted from ancient time? . . . . Thus, as fast as men, adopting the new ethics, satisfy themselves of the illusiveness of duty as an innate

and independent fact, its irresistible force over the will will be lost, and if enough of the sentiment still exists to render them uneasy, they will turn to such pleasures and distractions as may palliate and eventually silence it altogether." [5]

Plainly the moral sense, dissolving all forces which urge righteousness on man, instead of completing moral life, ends in the destruction of morality.

142. Of course, the new philosophers are at hand to ward off so fatal a consequence. The moral faculty, they tell us, is an organic structure wrought out by the work of generations. Being such, it will not pass away in a day, as it has not risen in a day; nor can it ever be counteracted or overcome by the human will. For organic structures imply an irresistible necessity of action, and require absolute obedience. Herbert Spencer has, at full length, described complete morality as the necessary result of organic conditions existing in the ultimate stage of evolution. He expresses and defines it, not only in psychological, but also in physical and biological terms.

In psychological terms he thus describes it:

"The pleasures and pains which the moral sentiments originate, will, like bodily pleasures and pains, become incentives and deterrents, so adjusted in their strength to the needs, that the moral conduct will be the natural conduct." [6]

In physical terms he gives the following description of it:

"The conduct of the individual so (*ideally*) constituted and associated with like individuals, is one in which all the actions, that is, the combined motions of all kinds, have become such as duly to meet every daily process, every ordinary occurrence, and every contingency in his environment. Complete life in a complete society is but another name for complete equilibrium between the co-ordinate activities of each social unit and those of the aggregate of units." [7]

[5] J. T. Bixby, The Crisis in Morals, pp. 146, 147. [6] Data of Ethics, § 47. [7] Ibid., § 28.

Expressed in biological terms, perfect morality is—

"The conduct of associated men who are severally so constituted that the various self-preserving activities, the activities required for rearing offspring, and those which social welfare demands, are fulfilled in the spontaneous exercise of duly proportioned faculties, each yielding when in action its quantum of pleasure: and who are, by consequence, so constituted that excess or defect in any one of these actions brings its quantum of pain, immediate and remote." [8]

143. Certain lines of conduct will, indeed, thus result as necessarily from the moral faculty as growth does from a healthy constitution, or as the motion of the heavenly bodies in their orbits does from the laws of gravitation. But what becomes of morality, if freedom is disowned and human action is subjected to the laws of matter, in spite of the consciousness which men universally have of their free self-determination? According to the physical view taken by Herbert Spencer, perfect morality is a perfect moving equilibrium between the internal forces of man and his environment, between his own activities and those of the persons with whom he is associated; or, in other terms, redistribution of matter and motion with increased coherence, definiteness, and heterogeneity. According to the biological view, perfect morality is perfect adjustment to all the functions required by individual and social life, so that every operation, if duly performed, becomes pleasurable, if unduly, painful. According to the former view, the perfect moral man is a perfect mechanism; according to the latter, a well-connected organism, distinct from that of brutes only by a higher degree of adjustment.

The moral sense cannot, indeed, raise morality to

[8] Data of Ethics, § 39.

higher perfection. How does it guide and determine conduct? The moral intuitions which it implies are misleading, because they confound the subjective and the objective order; vague and indeterminate,[9] because they are general forms of perception, or generalizations of varied experience concerning the relatively good; irrational and unintellectual, because they give no insight whatever into the nature of the moral law. The emotions corresponding to the intuitions are, of course, of the same character. For these reasons the moral sense has very properly been termed by Mr. Spencer a mass of vague feeling. And how does it proceed to action? It would seem, independently of consciousness; for actions which are the necessary consequence of organic habits are very often performed unconsciously or automatically. All this tends to remove morality from reason, and to lower it to the level of mere organic function.

From the psychological point of view the moral faculty, as far as it determines us to action, must be considered as the established rule of passion, and perfect morality as obedience to it. The author of "The Value of Life" openly says:

"The 'motive force' of life (*and according to him perfect life is morality*) is not reason, which, as Comte remarks, can only give light, but not force. The motive force is always a passion, active or latent."[10]

According to Mr. Spencer's theory this ruling passion is the love of sensuous pleasure grown supreme and independent in the normal state of ultimate evolution. This is quite evident. Morality is the pursuit of pleasure, not of spiritual, but of organic

[9] See Herbert Spencer, Justice, § 33.

[10] P. 206.

pleasure, the highest possible amount of which is man's ultimate destiny. As the last end must not be desired but for its own sake, the moral man cannot pursue pleasure from any other motive than from its love. Nor can he pursue pleasure as the supreme good constantly and effectively, unless the love of it has become in him sovereign and all-ruling. But the love of sensuous pleasure is a passion, the first of all passions, the root from which all others grow. According to the utilitarian theory the ruling passion which should determine us to moral action is the love of others. This love, too, is a passion. For it is merely organic, regards but organic beings, and wishes or procures for them but organic or sensuous pleasure. The positivists are not loath to grant this. Some of them openly maintain that the root of altruism, of social life and action, is sexual love. A. Comte, though regarding the love of humanity as the spring of pure morality, is still of the opinion that this supreme affection must be fostered and developed by the worship of woman as mother, wife, and daughter.

Material equilibration, mechanism, mere organic activity in part unconscious and automatical, in part proceeding from vague cognition and feeling, the reign of an animal passion, complete gratification of sensuous desires, is not morality, but the reverse of it, the emancipation of man from the rule of reason. Such is the result in which the moral sense ends, though it has been extolled as the supreme law, as the main support and moving force of moral conduct. Even if it existed, which, consistently also with modern philosophy, must be denied, it would give the

death-blow to all moral life in the ultimate and highest stage of evolution.

Here we come to the close of our inquiry into the moral law, its nature, its existence, its obligation, its sacred and absolute necessity. The evolutionary moralists started with high pretensions. They promised us a more correct conception of law, a more effective sanction of moral precepts, a more exalted moral faculty, purer and sublimer moral feelings, a wonderful freedom and independence of man combined with irresistible necessity of moral conduct. As a careful examination has shown, they have in every respect given us the opposite of what they promised. By their theories the idea of law is adulterated, moral precepts are rendered impossible, all that constitutes obligation and necessity is denied, sanction is deprived of efficacy, duty turned into an abstraction, the moral sense perverted to such a degree as to destroy morality itself.

144. Christian ethics, then, stands as yet unconquered. The law it sets forth emanates from the Supreme Reason, and is, as far as it is received in man, identical with human reason. The order it establishes is absolutely necessary, since it prescribes the acts naturally conducive to the highest good and forbids those swerving from this direction, and so leads us up to the supreme end necessarily required both by the wisdom and bounty of the Creator and the nature of rational creation. Its sanction is necessary, because established with necessity by the Supreme Will, and is most efficient, because consisting in eternal reward and punishment. And yet, though necessary, this law is compatible with freedom, and though

demanding implicit obedience, raises man to supreme dignity. It cannot be abolished or superseded. All attempts to do so have proved and must ever prove to be destructive of reason, of the eternal foundations of right and order, of virtue, purity, and true happiness.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW JUSTICE.

145. Justice, also, according to the new theories, falls within the province of morals.

146. Justice, because it consists in rendering to each one his own, implies rights and duties; rights on the part of him who receives his due, and duties on the part of him who renders what is due to others.

147. According to modern philosophy, rights with their corresponding duties originate proximately in positive enactments.

148. Yet ultimately they are based either on the public welfare or on the conditions of existence.

149. Herbert Spencer deduces from the conditions necessary to the preservation and evolution of the human race three fundamental laws of justice: Each individual ought to receive the benefits and the evils of his own nature and consequent conduct. Each individual is subject to the restriction that it shall not in a large measure impede the conduct by which each other individual achieves benefits or brings on himself injuries. In cases in which the group or society is attacked, partial or complete sacrifices of individuals have to be made in defence of it.

150. Justice so conceived implies a positive element, the recognition of each one's claims to unimpeded activity and the benefits it brings, and a negative element, the consciousness of the limits which the presence of other men necessitates. The positive element is thought to establish inequality; the negative element, equality.

151. Accordingly rights are conceived as particular liberties deducible from the general freedom constituting justice.

152. Binding necessity is given to justice like other moral laws first by external coercion, then by the natural consequences of action, and, lastly, by a special sentiment.
153. This sentiment of justice is first merely egoistic, being the desire of having free play for one's faculties.
154. But later on, when social life is developed, an altruistic element resulting from sympathy is added to it.
155. For in consequence of sympathy, the disagreeable state of the mind that would be excited in another by harm done to him, is imagined with such clearness that the imagination serves as a deterrent; and the represented gratification of another is so strong as to prompt to the act conducing to the gratification.
156. If the altruistic element is fully developed, control by it will become a second nature and will yield the purest pleasure.
157. J. S. Mill gives another analysis of the sentiment of justice. He resolves it into the belief that some individual or individuals have been wronged, and the desire to punish the wrong-doer; and again he resolves the desire of inflicting punishment into the impulse of self-defence and the feeling of sympathy, which grow strongest when security is imperilled by injury.
158. Justice has been adulterated in its very idea by theories of this kind. It loses its necessity and its rational character.
159. It is no longer the equal protection of the freedom of all, but is perverted into oppression of the weaker by the stronger.
160. Nor can justice any longer have existence in society. All the supports that ought to uphold it are weakened or destroyed.
161. The sentiment of justice is radically egoistic.
162. Even the fellow-feeling, which is called its altruistic element, is essentially egoistic.
163. Justice is thus completely undone.

145. No sooner had the era of the new philosophy begun to dawn at the close of the "Dark Ages," than a divorce was brought about between justice and morality, which had been inseparably united ever

since Christianity asserted its regenerating influence. Morality, it was then thought, had reference only to private conduct and to the motives of action, while justice regarded the external relations of men. The one, therefore, was considered to be within the province of religion ordering man to God by conviction and feeling; the other within the province of the state enforcing the right order of society by compulsion. When, however, in later times religion had been abolished and man had been declared independent of the Deity, a reunion of the divorced orders was effected. Then justice was again conceived as an integrant part of morality, as necessary for its completeness as the body is for the entirety of human nature. It would thus seem as if the great ideas of morality, justice, and religion were, in modern philosophy, subject to the same fate as nations in political life. Powerful minds demolish and reconstruct them, as conquerors overthrow and dismember kingdoms and create of them new empires.

To this reconstruction the hedonistic and utilitarian theories have greatly contributed. Being termed by Mr. Spencer now a condition to the maintenance of life, now a condition to the greatest happiness, justice falls directly within the agnostic conception of the moral law and of morality. For the moral law was defined as the fundamental conditions of life, social and individual, and morality as the pursuit of the means, or the realizing of the conditions, to happiness. J. S. Mill even more explicitly professes the same view:

"Justice," he says, "is a name for a certain kind of classes of moral rules which concern the essentials of human well-

being more nearly, and are, therefore, of more absolute obligation than any other rules for the guidance of life." [1]

Accordingly, justice is no longer relegated to jurisprudence, but treated at full length by modern moralists. It is even one of the principal subjects of their discussions. Nor could it be otherwise. For if the moral law expresses the conditions of life, and, as the utilitarians think, of social life first and pre-eminently, it becomes the business of ethics to make out the rules of human intercourse, and, in particular, those which, as justice does, bear on the very root of social existence. We must, however, distinguish a twofold task which in this regard morals, as a philosophical science, have to fulfill. They point out special duties, establishing them by demonstration, and lay down general laws, inquiring into their nature and tracing them back to their ultimate basis. The new philosophy has not neglected this latter function, which belongs to fundamental ethics, or, as others put it, to the data of ethics. Having marked out justice and benevolence as the general laws of social conduct, it proceeds to develop their conception, to show their rise and growth from sentient nature, and to examine the necessity and binding force inherent in them. It still remains for us before closing our treatise to pass in review the modern theories of these two general duties, and to contrast them with the doctrine of Christian philosophy.

146. What, then, is justice? What features are peculiar and essential to it? It may be taken subjectively or objectively. Taken subjectively, it is a habit constantly prompting us to render unto each

[1] Utilitarianism, chap. v.

one his own.[2] Taken objectively, it is that which is due to each one as his own. In accordance with this definition, justice tends to establish a certain order of equality, inasmuch as in virtue of it strictly so much is rendered to every one as is due to him, and so much restored as was taken, or as was yielded by him, of his own.[3] As to this conception, there is scarcely any difference among philosophical writers from the highest antiquity down to our days. This is the view taken, also, by Mr. Spencer. He says:

"Commenting on the different meanings of justice, Aristotle concludes that 'the just will therefore be the lawful and the equal; and the unjust, the unlawful and the unequal. But since the unjust is also one who takes more than his share,' etc. And that justice was similarly conceived by the Romans they proved by including it under such meanings as exact, proportionate, impartial, severally implying fairness of division; and still better by identification of it with equity, which is a derivative of *æquus*, the word *æquus* itself having for one of its meanings just or impartial. This coincidence of view among ancient peoples respecting the nature of justice has extended to modern peoples, who . . . . one and all show us the identification of justice with equalness."[4]

As a further analysis shows, justice implies both duties and claims; duties on the part of him who renders what is due to another, claims on the part of him who receives, or is to receive his due. If the claim is clear and definite, it is called a right, and the corresponding duty a strict obligation of justice. J. S. Mill seems to make the same distinction when he affirms:

"Justice implies something which it is not only right to do and wrong not to do, but which some individual person can claim from us as his moral right."[5]

[2] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., ii.-ii., qu. 58, art. 1.

[3] Ibid., qu. 57, art. 1.

[4] Data of Ethics, § 60.

[5] Utilitarianism, chap. v.

Justice being thus analyzed, we easily understand what special subjects must be discussed in the present chapter. What is it that must be considered as one's own? What is the nature of rights and of the duties corresponding to them? To what general formula may they be reduced? How do they originate, how are they sanctioned and rendered binding? Whence is that special sentiment existing within us by which we are, so early in life, aware of our own and of others' just claims, and are so powerfully impelled to demand and to yield compliance with them? How was this sentiment developed and matured so as to gain such a sway both over individuals and over society? These are questions which at once present themselves to every thinking mind. Undoubtedly, if justice is within the province of morals, the answer given by the new and by Christian philosophers must differ as widely as their theories of moral obligation do. We have, then, again to enter on a field of controversy, notwithstanding the universal agreement we have met with in defining and resolving the conception of justice.

147. Let us first review the immediate origin which rights and their corresponding duties have according to modern philosophy, and thence afterwards trace them back to their ultimate causes.

When mankind emerged from the condition of brutes and reason began to dawn, all enjoyed unabridged freedom. Each one's might was then his right, and each one's restriction was but his want of physical power, just as it now happens among wild animals. But things could not remain so; in such a state mankind would have perished owing to internal hostilities. Society was soon understood to be a

necessity for self-preservation, and was formed the more readily, as men had inherited gregarious habits from their brutal ancestors. Yet society could not exist and reach its end, unless restrictions were imposed on each member, and rights were guaranteed as a compensation. The manner in which this came to pass is conceived differently. Either, as Mr. Spencer thinks, a mighty chief arose and obtained authority over his tribe, or, as Professor Huxley puts it, the power of the head of a patriarchal family was extended little by little, or, as Hobbes and J. J. Rousseau imagined, the individuals renounced by contract their liberty and transferred their rights, either completely or in part, to a common government, chosen to maintain peace and order. It is the task of the governmental authority, in whatever manner established, to determine by laws what each one is allowed or forbidden to do, what each one may claim from others and is bound to render them, and impartially to enforce the laws thus enacted. The influence of religion and public opinion on the political government in achieving this task is, of course, not excluded, but rather presupposed. Thus the natural rights of man, consisting in his physical power, were transformed into guaranteed rights.

If such is their immediate origin, rights may be conceived as positive enactments, and justice as conformity with positive law. J. S. Mill is of the opinion that such was, in fact, its original conception among all nations.

"In most, if not in all languages, the etymology of the word which corresponds to the just points to an origin connected either with positive law or with that which was, in most cases,

the primitive authoritative custom. There can, I think, be no doubt that the idea mère, the primitive element in the formation of justice, was conformity to law. It constituted the entire idea among the Hebrews up to the birth of Christianity, as might be expected in the case of a people whose laws attempted to embrace all subjects on which precepts were required, and who believed those laws to be a direct emanation from the Supreme Being. But other nations, and in particular the Greeks and Romans, who knew that their laws had been made originally, and still continued to be made, by men, were not afraid to admit that these men might make bad laws, might do by law the same things, and from the same motives, which, if done by individuals without the sanction of law, would be unjust. And hence the sentiment of injustice came to be attached, not to all violations of law, but only to the violations of such laws as *ought* to exist, including such as ought to exist, but do not exist: and to the laws themselves, if supposed to be contrary to what ought to be law. In this manner the idea of law and of its injunctions are still predominant in the notion of justice, even when the laws actually in force ceased to be accepted as the standard of it."

He concludes his analysis with the following remark:

"Thus the idea of legal constraint is still the generating idea of the notion of justice, though undergoing several transformations before the notion, as it exists in an advanced state of society, becomes complete."[6]

Stanch positivists, such as Mr. Bain and Professor Huxley, who do not allow philosophy to go beyond experience, content themselves with having traced rights back to civil authority and contracts. No attempt is made by them to go farther back, and could not, indeed, consistently be made. For them no higher cause exists than phenomena. Accordingly the civil government agreed on by the people must

[6] Utilitarianism, chap. v.

be conceived at once as the immediate and the ultimate source of rights.

148. But modern philosophers of greater depth of thought surmised a deeper foundation of rights beneath the phenomena experienced, and a higher standard of justice to be conformed to also by lawgivers. From the above quotation it is evident that J. S. Mill entertained this view. How could he else say that some laws ought not to exist and are, therefore, unjust, and that others ought to exist, and that their violation is an act of injustice? Quite consistently with his tenets he regarded the public welfare as such an ultimate basis of rights.

"To have a right is, I conceive, to have something which society ought to defend me in possession of. If the objector goes on to ask why it ought, I can give him no other reason than public utility."[7]

149. Others have traced rights and the duties corresponding to them back to the conditions of existence. Among them Mr. Spencer is unquestionably the leading genius. He sets forth his theory in his latest work on "Justice." The following is the gist of it.

Every man's own is whatsoever results from his nature and consequent conduct. Expressed in ethical terms this principle implies:

"That each individual ought to receive the benefits or the evils of his own nature and consequent conduct: neither being prevented from having whatever good his actions normally bring to him, nor allowed to shoulder off on other persons whatever ill is brought on him by his actions."[8]

Expressed in biological terms this same principle means—

[7] Utilitarianism, chap. v. [8] Justice, § 12.

"That individuals of most worth, as measured by their fitness to the conditions of existence, shall have the greatest benefits, and that inferior individuals shall receive smaller benefits or suffer greater evils, or both." [9]

"Or, that among adults the individuals best adapted to the conditions of existence shall prosper most, and the individuals least adapted shall prosper least." [10]

This constitutes the first and most fundamental law of justice: for on it all other laws are based. It is, moreover, the most general law, because it reigns throughout sentient nature, also in the realms beneath man; and the most necessary, because it conditions the survival of the fittest and the spreading of the best-adapted varieties and, hence, the preservation and evolution of the human race. For this reason it is also supreme, insomuch that every individual existence must be sacrificed to it.[11] Yet though such, it has to undergo some limitations. Association profits the individual and the species only if certain conditions are observed. For living together implies more or less mutual interference, which, if not restrained, must result in harm and destruction. Hence arises another law of justice.

"Each individual, receiving the benefits and the injuries due to its own nature and consequent conduct, has to carry on that conduct subject to the restriction that it shall not in any large measure impede the conduct by which each other individual achieves benefits or brings on itself injuries." [12]

This second law is sanctioned and observed even among the gregarious animals, but it needs to be much more carefully observed by men; for among

[9] Justice, § 5. [10] Ibid., § 12. [11] Ibid., § 4.
[12] Ibid., §§ 8, 14.

them association produces greater profit, yet is at the same time more complex and apt to cause more harmful interference.

Associations are not seldom attacked from without. Defence and protection in such cases entail on some individuals extraordinary sacrifices, which, however, are altogether justifiable, because necessary for the survival of the fittest variety of the species. Hence arises the third law of justice.

In cases where the group or society is attacked, partial or complete sacrifices of individuals have to be made in defence of it.[13]

This qualification of the first law of justice, in force even among gregarious animals, assumes large proportions among men as long as adaptation to social life is not yet complete. But completeness being once reached, and universal peace being established in society, it ceases to be required. Its obligation, therefore, is relative, while that of the first two laws is absolute.

It will now be possible more fully to understand the nature of justice and of the rights implied in it. Justice is a fundamental condition to all sentient existence; for its laws are observed throughout the animal kingdom, more or less perfectly, according as life stands lower or higher on the grade of being. It is in particular a condition most necessary for human existence, the more exactly to be complied with the higher the human race rises in evolution. Complete life being identical with happiness, it is plain why justice was also defined as the essential conditions to specified happiness.

[13] Justice, §§ 10, 15.

150. Concerning its intrinsic constituents Herbert Spencer says:

"The idea of justice, or at least of human justice, contains two elements. On the one hand there is that positive element implied by each man's recognition of his claims to unimpeded activities and the benefits they bring. On the other hand, there is that negative element implied by the consciousness of limits, which the presence of other men having like claims necessitates." [14]

The positive element establishes inequality.

"For if the principle is that each shall receive the benefits and evils due to his own nature and consequent conduct, then, since men differ in their powers, there must be differences in the results of their conduct. Unequal amounts of benefit are implied."

The negative element, on the contrary, establishes equality. For—

When it is seen, that if each pursues his ends regardless of his neighbor's claims, quarrels must result, there arouses the consciousness of bounds which must be set to the doings of each to avoid the quarrels. Experience shows that these bounds are, on the average, the same for all. And the thought of spheres of action bounded by one another, which hence results, involves the conception of equality." [15]

"The equality concerns the mutually limited sphere of action which must be maintained, if associated men are to co-operate harmoniously. The inequality concerns the results which each may achieve by carrying on his actions within the implied limits." [16]

As a formula expressing justice in a word and uniting its two elements, the following is proposed:

"Every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man." [17]

151. Hence follows the conception of rights. Rights are the particular freedoms deducible from the general freedom constituting justice.

[14] Justice, § 22. [15] Ibid. [16] Ibid., § 25. [17] Ibid., § 27.

"Whoever admits that each man must have a certain restricted freedom, asserts that it is *right* he should have this restricted freedom. If it be shown to follow, now in this case and now in that, that he is free to act up to a certain limit but not beyond it, then the implied admission is that it is *right* he should have the particular freedom so defined. And hence the several particular freedoms deducible may fitly be called, as they commonly are called, his *rights*." [18]

152. If such is the nature of justice, we can at once understand in what its obligation consists. According to the purely empirical view, its binding force is nothing else than compulsion exercised by public power. Consistently with Mr. Spencer's theory the laws of justice are ultimately binding, because they are the necessary conditions of happiness or of existence. However, before life is complete, the necessity of the moral laws in general asserts itself immediately in consciousness as the authority of higher or complex feelings sustained by political, religious and social sanction and later by the natural effects of action. The laws of justice, being moral laws, are known and felt as necessary in the same way. Practically, then, during incomplete life, their obligation consists in main force and utility. When the evolution of mankind shall be completed, morality will be supported chiefly by the moral sense, and so also will compliance with the duties corresponding to rights result from a special sentiment of justice.

153. The new moralists have taken great pains to explain the nature, origin and growth of this sentiment. And they had, indeed, to do so. Its existence in every human heart is a phenomenon so striking that no philosopher can overlook it. Its wonderful power

[18] Justice, § 36.

and influence on human conduct deserves all the more the attention of the thinker, the greater the stress is that is laid on it as a main, and eventually as the only, support of the social order.

As Mr. Spencer thinks, the sentiment of justice is first only egoistic.

"Stop an animal's nostrils, and it makes frantic efforts to free its head. Tie its limbs together, and its struggles to get them at liberty are violent. Chain it by the neck or leg, and it is some time before it ceases its attempts to escape. Put it in a cage, and it long continues restless. Generalizing these instances, we see that in proportion as the restraints on actions by which life is maintained are extreme, the resistance to them is great. Conversely, the eagerness with which a bird seizes the opportunity for taking flight, and the joy of a dog when liberated, show how strong is the love of unfettered movement."

"Displaying like feelings in like ways, man displays them in other and wider ways. He is irritated by invisible restraints as well as by visible ones; and, as his evolution becomes higher, he is affected by circumstances and actions which in more remote ways aid or hinder the pursuit of ends. . . . . Beginning with the joy felt in ability to use the bodily powers and gain the resulting benefits, accompanied by irritation at direct interferences, this gradually responds to wider relations: being excited now by the incidents of personal bondage, now by those of political bondage, now by those of class privilege, and now by small political changes. Eventually this sentiment, sometimes so little developed in the Negro that he jeers at a liberated companion because he has no master to take care of him, becomes so much developed in the Englishman that the slightest infraction of some mode of formal procedure at a public meeting or in Parliament, which cannot intrinsically concern him, is vehemently opposed, because, in some distant and indirect way, it may help to give possible powers to unnamed authorities, who may perhaps impose unforeseen burdens or restrictions." [19]

This egoistic sentiment, Mr. Spencer thinks,

[19] Justice, § 18.

corresponds to the first and fundamental law of justice.

"Clearly, the egoistic sentiment of justice is a subjective attribute which answers to that objective requirement constituting justice—the requirement that each adult shall receive the results of his own nature and consequent actions. For, unless the faculties of all kinds have free play, these results cannot be gained or suffered; and, unless there exists a sentiment which prompts maintenance of the sphere for this free play, it will be trenched upon and the free play impeded." [20]

154. To the egoistic an altruistic element is added later on when social life has commenced—that is, when the egoistic feelings have been restrained by the dread of retaliation, of political, divine and social sanctions. Then it is that sympathy awakens. For by sympathy is meant:

"That in gregarious creatures a feeling displayed by one is apt to arouse kindred feelings in others, and is apt to do this in proportion as others are intelligent enough to appreciate the signs of the feeling."

In society, established under the above-mentioned influence, kindred feelings are in many ways aroused.

"In a permanent group there occur, generation after generation, incidents simultaneously drawing from its members manifestations of like emotions—rejoicings over victories and escapes, over prey jointly captured, over supplies of wild food discovered, as well as laments over defeats, scarcities, inclemencies, etc. And to these greater pleasures and pains felt in common by all, and so expressing themselves that each sees in others the signs of feelings like those which he has and is displaying, must be added smaller pleasures and pains daily resulting from meals taken together, amusements, games, and from the not infrequent adverse occurrences which affect several persons at once." [21]

However, the altruistic sentiment of justice, growing out of sympathy, "is slow in assuming a high form,

[20] Justice, § 18. [21] Ibid., § 20.

partly because its primary component does not become highly developed until a late phase of progress, partly because it is relatively complex, and partly because it implies a stretch of imagination not possible for low intelligences."

155. The reader might experience some difficulty in conceiving how sympathy engenders an altruistic feeling, consisting in regard for the rights of others. But Mr. Spencer offers an explanation in his "Principles of Psychology."[22] By sympathy we are apt vividly to imagine the pains and pleasures that are given, or may be given, to others by our actions, so much so that, little by little, a firm association will be established in our consciousness between this kind of causes and effects. But pain vividly represented deters us from the act that causes it. Or, as Mr. Spencer says:

"The disagreeable state of mind that would be excited in another by a sharp word or harsh act, is imagined with such clearness that the imagination serves partially or wholly as a deterrent."

Likewise pleasure, vividly represented, is an impulse to gratifying acts:

"The represented gratification of another is strong enough to prompt to the act conducing to the gratification."

A dislike of inflicting pain on others, and a liking for giving pleasure to others, from a purely moral and disinterested motive, is thus awakened in us; an altruistic sentiment, the gratification of which must yield a peculiar pleasure, and the revulsion of which cannot but be singularly painful.

Hence it should be understood how, from our love

[22] Part viii., chap. viii., Altruistic Sentiments.

of personal freedom, the love could also arise of others' freedom, and from our dislike of injuries personally suffered, dislike of injuries to be suffered by others —that is to say, the altruistic sentiment of justice.

"This sentiment (*of justice*) evidently does not consist of representations of simple pleasures or pains experienced by others; but it consists of representations of those emotions which others feel, when actually or prospectively allowed or forbidden the activities by which pleasures are to be gained or pains escaped. The sentiment of justice is thus constituted by representation of a feeling that is itself highly representative.

"The feeling thus represented, or sympathetically excited, as we say, is that which, under the head of egoistic sentiments, was described as the love of personal freedom. It is the feeling which delights in surrounding conditions that put no restraint on the activities—the feeling which is pained, even in inferior natures, by whatever shackles the limbs or arrests locomotion; and which, in superior natures, is pained by whatever indirectly impedes the activities, and even by whatever threatens to impede them. This sentiment, primarily serving to maintain intact the sphere required by the individual for the due exercise of his desires, secondarily serves, when sympathetically excited, to cause respect for the like spheres of other individuals—serves, also, by its sympathetic excitement, to prompt defence of others when their spheres of action are invaded. Evidently, in proportion as the sentiment under its egoistic form becomes more highly re-representative, so as to be excitable by more indirect and remote invasions of liberty, it simultaneously becomes, under its altruistic form, more appreciative of the liberty of others—more respectful of others' like claims, and desirous not to trench on others' equal rights." [23]

156. Though of late birth and developing only by slow degrees, still the altruistic sentiments gain strength and efficacy as human society rises higher in evolution. They become more constant and stronger, when, pain-inflicting actions having been diminished, sympathy will have become more steady.

[23] Principles of Psychology, § 530.

"Now that the pain-inflicting activities are less habitual, and the repression of the sympathies less constant, the altruistic sentiments, which find their satisfaction in conduct that is regardful of others and so conduces to harmonious co-operation, are becoming stronger."

They obtain, also, greater power of controlling our conduct in proportion as, after long experience, counteracting them is regarded as more painful, and, on the contrary, gratifying them is known to bring happier feelings. After repeated experience of the moral discomforts one "has felt from witnessing the evils indirectly caused by certain of his acts, he is led to check himself when again tempted to those acts."

"Conversely with the pleasure-giving acts: repetition of kind deeds, and experience of the sympathetic gratifications that follow, tend continually to make stronger the association between such deeds and feelings of happiness." [24]

Eventually a beneficial control by altruistic sentiments will become a habit, a second nature. Then it is that their gratification will lead to the purest pleasure, and that our experiences concerning altruistic actions will have been turned into general laws of moral conduct registered in our organism.

157. Somewhat different is the explanation which J. S. Mill has given of the sentiment of justice. He distinguishes the following two elements in it: the belief that there is some definite individual, or individuals, to whom harm has been done contrary to right, and the desire to punish him who has done the harm. The desire of inflicting punishment he resolves into the impulse of self-defence and the feeling of sympathy, and consequently thinks it to be implanted in our nature.

[24] Principles of Psychology, § 531.

"It is natural to resent, and to repeal or retaliate, any harm done or attempted against ourselves, or against those with whom we sympathize. . . . It is, we know, common to all animal nature. . . . Human beings, on this point, only differ from other animals in two particulars. First, in being capable of sympathizing, not solely with their offspring, or some of the more noble animals, with some superior animal who is kind to them, but with all human, and even with all sentient beings. Secondly, in having a more developed intelligence, which gives a wider range to the whole of their sentiments, whether self-regarding or sympathetic. By virtue of this superior intelligence, even apart from his superior range of sympathy, a human being is capable of apprehending a community of interest between himself and the human society of which he forms a part, such that any conduct which threatens the security of society generally is threatening to his own, and calls forth his instinct (if instinct it be) of self-defence. The same superiority of intelligence, joined to the power of sympathizing with human beings generally, enables him to attach himself to the collective idea of his tribe, his country, or mankind, in such a manner that any act hurtful to them rouses his instinct of sympathy and urges him to resist." [25]

The desire of punishment is, however, not an ingredient of the sentiment of justice before it has become moral. And it is moral only when it becomes subordinate to the social feelings so as to wait on and obey their call, or when it acts in directions conformable to the general good, to such a degree that we resent a hurt to society, though not otherwise a hurt to ourselves, and do not resent a hurt to ourselves, however painful, unless it be of the kind which society has a common interest with us in repressing.

From the nature of the rights which are infringed by unjustly inflicting harm, J. S. Mill derives the peculiar energy of the sentiment of justice. These rights

[25] Utilitarianism, chap. v.

constitute the security without which no human being can possibly do.

"Now this most indispensable of all necessaries after physical nutriment (*security*) cannot be had, unless the machinery for providing it is kept unintermittedly in active play. Our notion, therefore, of the claims we have on our fellow-creatures to join in making safe for us the very groundwork of our existence, gathers feelings round it so much more intense than those concerned in any other of the more common cases of utility, that the difference in degree (as is often the case in psychology) becomes a real difference in kind."

Conversely, from the energy peculiar to the sentiments of justice, he derives the absoluteness of rights and corresponding duties.

"The claim assumes that character of absoluteness, that apparent infinity and incommensurability with all other considerations, which constitute the distinction between the feeling of right and wrong and that of ordinary expediency and inexpediency. The feelings concerned are so powerful, and we count so positively on finding a responsive feeling in others (all being alike interested), that *ought* and *should* grow into *must*, and recognized indispensability becomes a moral necessity, analogous to physical, and often not inferior to it in binding force."[26]

Evidently the absolute necessity which mankind has always attributed to duties corresponding to rights is, in Mill's opinion, the strength of a feeling, in the same manner as the principal sanction of the moral law is a mass of feeling which cannot be broken through.

158. It is not our business to admire the great talents and mental acquirements of which these theories are indicative on the part of their authors, after the manner in which an enthusiastic amateur extols the skill of the architects who have reared the towering

[26] Utilitarianism, chap. v.

piles of our modern cities. Our task is that of a critic. We have to take the systems to pieces, and to analyze and examine every component part of them. Let us at once descend to the very foundation which modern philosophers have laid for justice, and search into the groundwork on which they have built it up. Have they realized the true idea of justice, and set forth its necessary and essential attributes, and rested it on its proper basis?

If we are to consult the convictions of mankind as written down and testified by the most prominent historians and thinkers of all ages, as expressed in the law of every civilized nation, justice must be conceived as establishing among men a sacred, inviolable, and absolutely necessary order, which is essentially rational, originating in reason and intended for beings endowed with freedom. It is prior to all human laws and institutions, being the type and standard after which they are framed. It implies, on the one hand, rights which must necessarily be respected, and, on the other hand, duties which an unrelenting sanction must enforce. Rendering each one his own, it is the equal protection of the existence and liberty of all.

This idea of justice was present also to the mind of the modern philosophers. Were it not so, why, then, did they go beyond human laws to find a foundation for it? Why did they regard it as essential to complete human existence? Why did they define it as rendering each one his own, as equity and equality, and as the equal freedom of all? Why did they endeavor to account for its necessity and assert for it the need of universal sanction? Yet, though they have done all

this, their theories do not bear out this conception of justice: they adulterate its very idea and contradict its essential attributes.

Hedonistic or utilitarian justice involves no necessity, though it was defined as an essential condition to sentient existence or to human happiness. For earthly existence and earthly happiness are not necessary ends, not even in the evolutionary supposition, and much less according to the common conviction that man is more than a mortal organism. And even were earthly existence and happiness a necessity consistent with the evolutionary view, justice would be requisite as a means or as a condition only if mankind continued to exist and to develop by the survival of the fittest—a supposition verified by no experience. Moreover, there is no sufficient cause conceivable by which, in accordance with the new philosophy, justice might be established as an inviolable necessity for man. Also utilitarians and agnostics must grant that it lays restrictions on the freedom of every individual. But it is not man himself that restricts his own freedom. The restriction, to be a necessity, must come from without, from a higher and irresistible power. Now, where is that power? It is not the Deity. For the new theories are atheistic and regard man as supreme and absolutely independent. It is not society either; for its existence pre-supposes justice. Nor is it universal nature; only pantheists would recognize such supremacy. No other conceivable power remains.

However, what need is there of proofs and of inquiry? The new philosophers themselves have spoken plainly on this matter. Whatever they may

have said of justice in general as a condition to existence or to happiness, they refuse to acknowledge any particular law of it as necessary, absolute and invariable. Since existence develops into ever new forms, its particular conditions do not always remain the same; and since happiness is relative and varying, the means, too, conducive to it, must constantly vary. Hence the moral laws, the laws of justice included, are always changing, even to such extent that what was good and just in former ages is now bad and unjust, and what is unjust now may cease to be so in ages to come. These hedonistic and evolutionary tenets we have above set forth at full length. It is not necessary to repeat them here.[27]

Furthermore, in the new theories justice is no longer the outcome or result of reason. Modern philosophy describes it as a law arising ultimately from matter, proximately from organic life, as a moving equilibrium among sentient beings, as an organic adjustment to better function and perfect adaptation to environment, not devised and purposed by a thinking mind, but resulting, after many oscillations, from mutual attraction and repulsion. Nor is justice any longer peculiar to rational beings, a rule made for them exclusively. Its first and fundamental law, assigning to each the result of his nature and consequent conduct, reigns throughout the animal world; its second and third laws, restricting each one's freedom, prevail throughout the realm of gregarious animals. There is sub-human and human justice, the

[27] The uncertainty of justice has been very effectively illustrated by Mr. Bixby in a dialogue between Mr. Spencer and a holder of illegal property. See Crisis in Morals, pp. 131—141.

latter differing from the former only in degree of perfection.

159. Least of all is justice the equal protection of the freedom of all, though utilitarians and agnostics did not fail to term it so. J. S. Mill considers rights as claims which society must guarantee to every one, yet points out social welfare as the standard by which they must be determined. A worse tyranny than that implied in this supreme principle of justice could not be conceived. Individual existence as such is made rightless; it has to be sacrificed on the altar of universal humanity, or rather, of the sentient world. There is nothing which man may claim as his own against the multitude. He owns nothing but what is granted to him by the majority or the rulers who represent humanity.

Mr. Spencer finds equality and inequality involved in justice; inequality being established by the first and fundamental law, which ensures to all the results of their nature and their conduct; equality by the second, which sets the same limits to the activity of all. He terms inequality the brute, and equality the human element,[28] and is of the opinion that the restraints required by the second law are vaguely, if not definitely, seen to constitute what is called justice.[29] He also severely censures the Greek conception of justice, for the reason that inequality prevailed in it, and so resulted in the predominance of a ruling class and the subjection of the rest.[30]

And yet, strange to say, Mr. Spencer's theory lands us in the very same consequences for which he blames the Greek philosophers. Founded on the

[28] Justice, §§ 18, 23. [29] Ibid., § 14. [30] Ibid., § 23.

unheard-of maxim that evil results also must be regarded as each one's own, his first and fundamental law of justice creates superior and inferior ranks of men. In unison with it the best adapted must prosper most, the least adapted shall prosper least; the former must not be prevented from receiving all the benefits of their superior nature and consequent conduct; the latter cannot be allowed to shoulder off the ill brought on them by weakness, unfitness, or mischief. Such a law being universally carried out, an abyss must soon divide one portion of mankind from the other. There must arise a class highly prospering, destined to survive in the battle of life, and another falling into ever-greater wretchedness, doomed to succumb and to be exterminated. And this is absolutely necessary for the evolution of human existence.

The second law of justice, prescribing that each individual must so far restrict himself as not in any large measure to interfere with the conduct by which every other individual achieves benefits or brings on himself injuries, does not restore equality, as Mr. Spencer thinks, but, on the contrary, consolidates the established inequality. Conformably with it, the better adapted must give elbow-room to other equally well adapted, to reap the greatest possible amount of benefit derivable from their abilities; the less adapted must give free scope not only to one another, but also to their betters, to enjoy all the advantages of their superiority, and, in addition, they cannot be freed from whatever evils their inferiority brings on them. Whilst thus the class of the better adapted constantly develops and accumulates benefits, the class of the less adapted suffers under ever greater disadvantages,

until it gradually disappears. This fate is absolutely demanded by the survival of the fitter variety.

Is not such a division of mankind just as bad as that of old into masters and slaves? Nay, is it not in many respects considerably worse? The equal freedom, then, which the agnostics pretend to guarantee to all consists in the equal right of the upper ten thousand to increase their enjoyments, and in the equal right of the rest of mankind to suffer and to pine away in their miseries.

In full earnest we must here put the question: Has, consistently with the new morals, the less-adapted man any more right to live and to exist than the brute? Justice reigns also among animals, differing from that which is among men, not in kind but in degree. And where there is justice there are rights and duties. Yet brutes are daily slaughtered for the sake of man, nobody considering such an act as wrong and unjust. The difference between human and sub-human justice rests merely on the higher degree of intelligence peculiar to mankind. We are, however, told by the agnostics that there is a greater distance between the highly-civilized man of to-day and the savage than between the savage and the higher brute. Mr. Darwin and Mr. Brehm assure us that certain apes have given proofs of higher morality than many a man. The same is maintained by A. Comte, who includes the better brutes in humanity. We daily read in our modern literature of highly-intelligent and conscientious dogs, of languages spoken in the animal kingdom, of commonwealths there existing, and of codes of laws observed. Yet, with all that, the brutes are made our slaves and pitilessly destroyed.

On what ground ought the less-adapted man to be exempt from the same fate or to claim a higher right? In the light of modern theories his case is substantially the same as that of the brutes. There is nothing that could show an essential difference.

Direct reasons go yet farther to justify the slaughter of man. The supreme law and the ultimate end of all justice is the survival of the fittest species and of the fittest variety. As in obedience to this supreme law the useless drones are, with full justice, put to death by the worker-bees; and as, to reach this ultimate end, the sacrifice of life is rightly demanded whenever the safety of the group is endangered: so must it be right to do away with the weak and burdensome members of society, in order to further the progress of the more advanced portion of the human race. We have not yet found any one to show that this is not a legitimate consequence of agnosticism.

160. The new philosophers, then, have stripped justice of its essential attributes—of its necessity, obligation, rationalness, sacredness—and have perverted it into tyranny and oppression. Thus they have effaced its very idea. Of course, so distorted, justice cannot reign in human society. This is the other great mistake of the new moral theories, that they render the existence of the order of justice a complete impossibility.

According to them, a certain order embodying claims and duties was first brought into existence among men by contracts and compulsory laws. Then the foreseen consequences of actions, utility, constituted rules which, while they ordained more just and equitable relations among men and were conducive

to greater happiness, claimed authority as inviolable duties. At last a special sentiment, meanwhile developed as an internal law, necessitates man to lines of conduct which realize at once the most perfect order of justice and consummate happiness.

But contracts may be immoral and unjust, as, in fact, those made and sworn to by robbers or by the members of the Mafia are. And, even if contracts are good and equitable, they are not obligatory if no higher power, no higher law is supposed to exist, but may at any time be rescinded by the same persons by whom they were concluded. Hence they cannot firmly establish the right order which is called justice.

Thus it is, also, with compulsory laws. Compulsion may be, and very often is, the most unjust oppression, the worst of all disorders. But be it what it may, it is in no case sufficient to establish steadfast relations which will universally be acquiesced in. If not sustained by the higher law of reason, it will always be resisted, and end in strife and anarchy.

Utility, conduciveness to happiness, as we already know, cannot constitute the moral law, and, therefore, cannot constitute the laws of justice either. Relative, variable, ever-changing, it is no fixed, determinate, and knowable rule. Much less is it a rule which with certainty determines what is due to each as his own; for the ever-changing and conflicting claims of self and others can, in the absence of any superhuman authority, never be definitely reconciled. And least of all is utility a rule which asserts itself as necessary and obligatory—not only because it is itself uncertain and indefinite, but, also, because man, once made sovereign and absolutely indepen-

dent, can consistently be subjected to no power, not even to that of society. The indefiniteness of justice, measured by utility, is averred by the agnostic and utilitarian philosophers themselves. Jeremy Bentham confesses:

"What justice is—this is what on every occasion is the subject-matter of dispute." [31]

Herbert Spencer contradicts Bentham, and is of opinion that justice is that division of ethics which admits of the greatest definiteness. Nevertheless, the apostle of reason finds it impossible clearly to determine what, in the course of evolution, is due to the individual and what to society.

"During the transitional stages there are necessitated successive compromises between the moral code which asserts the claims of society *versus* those of the individual, and the moral code which asserts the claims of the individual *versus* those of society. And evidently each such compromise, though for the time being authoritative, admits of no consistent or definite expression." [32]

"As already implied in various places, it is impossible during stages of transition which necessitate ever-changing compromises, to fulfil the dictates of absolute equity; and nothing beyond empirical judgments can be formed of the extent to which they may be, at any given time, fulfilled." [33]

161. The sentiment of justice will not make up for the deficiency of contracts, compulsion and utility. First, its very existence as a self-caused effect is absurd and chimerical. For, as the evolutionists tell us, it develops gradually as society is organized, by mutual consent or main force, and later on is governed by equitable laws based on utility. But, as we have just proved, society as a permanent institution cannot

[31] Quoted by H. Spencer, Data of Ethics, § 60.
[32] Ibid., § 55. [33] Ibid., § 109.

rise from compulsion and arbitrary agreements, nor can equitable laws originate in utility. Society established and good laws enacted presuppose in the rulers, as well as in the subjects, a strong and well-developed sense of justice.

Then, even if this sense existed, it would, in the new theories, be merely organic and be developed from animal instincts, whereas it is necessarily spiritual in its nature. For what is so plainly the function of immaterial faculties as the perception and the love of the sacred, eternal, and inviolable order by which, in the society of intelligent beings, its due sphere of freedom is given to each, though the manifold activities of all are interwoven and interdependent, like the motions of the numberless bodies of the material universe. True, both J. S. Mill and Herbert Spencer make the sentiment of justice dependent on intelligence; but, let it be well understood, on such intelligence as is not different in kind from the cognitional power of brutes, on such as, on account of its materiality, apprehends no order, no relation, no future event, and knows no good but that which gratifies the senses.

Nay, being of so low extraction, this sentiment is not only foreign to justice, but also opposed to it. It is essentially egoistic. This is implicity asserted by the new moralists, when they derive its first and fundamental element from our eagerness to use our powers and to gain the resulting benefits, from the irritation which we feel at direct interferences, or from the desire of retaliation for injury. Yet, it is said, an altruistic element accrues to it later on from sympathy, by which we feel the pains and

pleasures of others as our own. Unquestionably, sympathy mitigates egoism, but if only animal and organic, cannot overrule it. On the contrary, in the union of the two, the egoistic element spoken of, having the preponderance, will always be the ruling power. It is not only stronger and lies deeper in nature than the later-arising altruistic sentiment, but is also the source from which the latter derives all its strength as a motive of just action. For, in the opinion of the utilitarians, we feel sympathetically with others and are interested in their well-being, because the love of ourselves is extended to them, they being regarded as immediately connected with us. In the opinion of Mr. Spencer the altruistic sentiment directly grows out of the egoistic.

"The egoistic feelings, sympathetically excited, produce the altruistic feelings." [34]

"This sentiment, primarily serving to maintain intact the sphere required by the individual for the due exercise of his powers and fulfilment of his desires, secondarily serves, when sympathetically excited, to cause respect for the like spheres of other individuals. . . . . Here, as in every case, there can be no altruistic feeling but that which arises by sympathetic excitement of a corresponding egoistic feeling." [35]

162. Nor is the root only egoistic. The fellow-feeling itself, which is thought to be excited by sympathy and to complete justice, is not so purely altruistic as Mr. Spencer tells us; carefully examined, it turns out to be essentially egoistic. The sentiment, which consciously determines our conduct by the pain or pleasure it gives us, does not work as a disinterested, but as an egoistic motive. But the fellow-feeling growing out of sympathy becomes a power controlling

[34] Principles of Psychology, § 529. [35] Ibid., § 530.

our actions by the pain or pleasure which we experience when thwarting or gratifying it. Certainly, then, it is egoistic. What seems to be more altruistic than the sentiment of pity sympathetically excited? And yet, to understand that in Mr. Spencer's theory it is not really altruistic, but truly egoistic, we need only read the following lines:

"Pity modifies conduct by prompting efforts to assuage pain that is already being borne. . . . . The sympathy thus exhibited with pain, sensational or emotional, may, however, lead to two opposite courses, according as the individual sympathetically affected has a small or a great amount of representative power. If he is not highly imaginative, he may, and often does, rid himself of the disagreeable consciousness by getting out of sight or hearing; and even if highly imaginative, he is prompted to do this when no remedial measures can be taken. But, if his imagination is vivid, and if he also sees that the suffering can be diminished by his aid, then he cannot escape from his disagreeable consciousness by going away, since the represented pain continues with him, impelling him to return and to assist." [36]

Accordingly, the motive prompting the merciful man is the desire to rid himself of the disagreeable consciousness he has at the sight of others' misery. It is this desire alone that induces him to aid the suffering, if he cannot relieve himself by flight. What conduct could be more egoistic? And if pity itself is egoistic, justice, certainly, is not less so. The sympathetic sentiment implied in it is in kind the same as that of pity, but generally much weaker in intensity.

If, then, to render us just and equitable, only the two elements spoken of by Mr. Spencer are at work within us; if no higher sentiment unites, directs and

[36] Principles of Psychology, § 529.

ennobles them, which is not supposed to be the case: it is egoism that will principally determine our conduct towards others. But egoism will generally not allow us to mind the claims of our fellow-creatures if our own interests or our own gratifications are at stake; nor will it induce us to render each his own to the disadvantage of ourselves. It will do so least for all when incited by some strong passion. In such a condition man does not take reasonable regard for his own welfare; how, then, should he be controlled by reason in his conduct toward others? Daily we see the drunkard and the epicure ruin and disgrace their own family, however tender and sympathetic their feelings else may be. The revengeful or the jealous are not only not shocked at the pains to which they see others subject, but, on the contrary, take delight in them. With good reason, therefore, must we fear that the hedonistic sentiment of justice will generally not counsel justice, but often its reverse.

A peculiar absurdity has yet been added by J. S. Mill. As was remarked above, he accounts for the absoluteness which has always been attributed to the laws of justice by the strength of our sentiment, thinking that subjective necessity of feeling is unconsciously transferred to the objective rule. By this explanation he not only contradicts the general and most firm conviction of mankind, but perverts the very sentiment which should concur in constituting the climax of morality and serve as the foundation of the entire social order, into a necessary universal delusion.

163. Treating in this chapter of the new order of justice, we meet with the same destructive tendency

of the new theories and the same self-contradictions that have struck us in all other discussions. The new philosophers are well acquainted with the essential features of justice, but at the same time they adulterate its ideas. They know it to be necessary. But they do not refer it as a necessary condition to a really necessary end: they disown any power that might establish it as a necessity and impose it as an inviolable restraint on the will; they render it unsteady, variable, unknowable, to such an extent that no definite law of it can be laid down. They regard justice as the order peculiar to intelligent beings; yet they derive it from matter and convert it into a material or organic law common to brute and man. They define it as the equal protection of the freedom of all; yet they reduce by it the majority of men to slavery and destruction. They assign causes which ought to bring the order of justice into existence; but these causes effect the reverse, or are absolutely inefficient, since they can neither determine rights and duties nor reconcile conflicting human interest. Lastly, they resort to a sentiment which is supposed to bring justice to its highest perfection; but this sentiment cannot exist, because it is presumed to be self-caused; it produces no efficient regards for rights, because it is mainly egoistic; it is irrational, because it arises from animal instincts and stultifies human reason.

CHAPTER XIV.

JUSTICE DIVINELY ORDAINED.

164. Christian ethics, basing justice on God, accepts its common definition, in developing which, however, it widely differs from the egoistic view.

165. According to the Christian conception, a right is a moral power residing in a person, in virtue of which he can exact his own, that is, things and actions which are subservient to him as to their proper end.

166. By the rights and duties implied in justice order is established among individuals, and between individuals and society. Every individual rightfully claims what is destined to subserve his existence and activity; society rightfully claims from its members what is necessary for its efficient operation in promoting the public welfare; and the members rightfully claim from society that they are not treated unfairly. Hence justice is threefold, commutative, legal, and distributive.

167. Justice so conceived rests on God; for rights and duties, because they are moral of their nature, must be derived from Him.

168. Justice is part of the eternal law. God, making a law of the right order, invests everybody with the power of excluding all others from interfering with his own, and lays on all the duty of yielding to the power so conferred.

169. Because man cannot procure by himself all the means needful for the attainment of the ultimate end, society is necessary. It, therefore, is willed by God, and invested with authority over its members.

170. Yet authority is conferred on it by God only for the pur-

pose of furthering the common welfare, and, therefore, its members have a divine right to a fair government.

171. The charter of rights forming part of the eternal law is manifested by the light of reason.

172. Justice based on God is absolutely necessary, unchangeable, supreme, and universally knowable.

173. Rights imply coercive power.

174. Reason proclaims not only vague and indefinite, but certain and well-defined rights, which are prior to any positive law.

175. The coercive power proper to rights does not come from the state, but from God.

176. The Christian theory of justice is the most consistent and the most sublime.

164. JUSTICE, as its obvious notion implies, is not a law that reigns in brute creation, but one that founds in human society an inviolable order; nor is it a material and organic law, but a law of reason, spiritual, and much more sublime than nature with all its harmony and beauty. It is not, however, human reason that has excogitated and brought it into being; for it is prior to all our institutions, the model after which laws are framed and the test of their goodness. Nor is general earthly happiness the standard to which it must conform, or the end to which it ultimately orders our conduct towards others; for were it so conditioned, it would vanish in indefiniteness and uncertainty and lose its binding force. All these propositions have been evinced by the critical examination of the new theories. But if such is justice, such its nature and its origin, it must be the offspring of the Supreme Reason, the eternal conception of the Divine Mind and the necessary decree of the Divine Will. We have not to look for the genius that will trace it back to so high a cause,

and from thence derive its attributes, its power, and sacred necessity. Christian philosophy has long ago solved this problem, and Christian nations have known no other justice than that which is heaven-born.

Christian moralists do not differ from modern philosophers in the obvious conception of justice. They, too, define justice taken subjectively as the habit prompting us to render each one his own, and taken objectively, as that which is due to each one as his own. But they have developed this conception in their own way. They do not define each one's own as the result of one's nature and conduct, both good and bad, as Mr. Spencer does, but as that which is subservient to each one as to its proper end, or is destined for each one's special use. The things thus owned are closely connected with the owner; sometimes physically, as the members of his body or the faculties of his mind, being integrant parts of his nature; sometimes morally, as reputation, or property, or the services of others, being distinct from, and only related to him.

165. Far more widely does Christian ethics differ from the modern view when it comes to explain and analyze right and duty implied in justice: the right to claim our own, and the duty to render others their own. The duties corresponding to rights do not consist in a physical necessity; for, as everybody knows, they can be, and daily are, transgressed. They are consequently a moral necessity resulting from the necessary connection of means with an end apprehended as necessary. Accordingly rights, too, do not consist in the physical power to enforce certain actions; they are evidently of a moral nature. A

right, therefore, is defined as a moral power residing in a person by virtue of which he can exact his own, that is, things and actions referred to him as to their proper end. Were it a physical power, then the child lying weak and helpless in the cradle, or the man tottering under the burden of years and infirmities, however good and useful his life may have been, or the traveller attacked and overpowered by waylayers, would be utterly rightless; and robbing or killing them would not be an act of injustice. A right may be enforced by coercion, but it is not thereby constituted. Its real nature consists in the moral power inherent in a person of so exacting his own as to lay others under strict obligations of complying with his demand, in the same way as the authority of a father does not primarily consist in the punishment which he inflicts or may inflict on disobedient children, but in the power which is vested in him to enjoin precepts on them which are obligatory in conscience.

166. The order which rights and corresponding duties establish among men is threefold according to the ancient view. First, man may claim by a strict right what is destined to subserve his individual existence and activity; and to comply with such claims is every other man's bounden duty. By rights and duties of this kind the personal freedom and independence of all is secured and built on a solid, indestructible basis. The order so constituted among individuals is called commutative justice, because it reduces the amounts of what is taken from the one and of what is rendered to him by the other to strict equality.

Individuals, however, though free and independent

of one another, are in need of association, because, weak and imperfect as they are, they cannot severally procure all the means necessary for due activity. Hence, society becomes an indispensable necessity. But, if thus necessary, society can claim as its own all that is required for its existence and its proper operation; and its members are strictly bound to comply with all such claims. Thus a new order arises, which is called legal justice, because society claims its own through its head, and this through common laws, obeying which the members discharge their social duties.

But, as society has its claims on the individuals which compose it, so also the individuals have their claims on society. For, as society comes into being for the sole purpose of assisting and protecting individual existence and activity, its members exact, with good reason, that it should not trespass on their own by taxing them beyond what the public welfare demands, or by distributing the common goods or common burdens unfairly, and not according to merit and desert. It is this order, shielding the subjects against oppression by governmental power, that is termed distributive justice.

Of the three orders described, the first alone answers to the general definition of justice perfectly and in every regard, and is, therefore, called justice in the strictest sense; whereas the others are justice only in a wider sense. It is also the first that is conceived as most necessary, as prior and fundamental to the two others.[1]

[1] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., ii.–ii., qu. 58, art. 5, 6; qu. 80; V. Cathrein, Moralphilosophie, vol. i., pp. 366–382.

Clearly the explanation of the idea of justice given by Christian ethics is the most consistent of all those attempted by philosophers. It is the one that is in fullest harmony with the view of mankind manifested in languages, laws, and customs; the one that best commends itself to universal reason, to the unsophisticated sense of the unlearned, as well as to the acuteness of the philosopher.

167. Justice, establishing among free rational beings the universal and harmonious order set forth above, can rest on no other ultimate foundation than the Deity. The duties implied are not of a physical, but of a moral necessity, which consists in their connection with an absolutely necessary end. Whence is this connection? From God alone. He is the absolutely necessary, the ultimate end of man. His Supreme Reason conceives the ways and means necessary to reach Him and possess Him in eternal contemplation and love, and His Will, infinitely holy, ordains and sanctions them by an unchangeable decree. Rights can descend from no other source. They are the power of laying others under moral necessity. If moral obligation ultimately comes from God, the power also of imposing it must be from Him and originate in His eternal decrees.

Moreover, justice, as defined and explained by Christian ethics, is evidently within the province of morality, a portion of the moral law. For the order established by justice is peremptorily demanded by reason, since it follows strictly and necessarily from the supreme principles implanted in rational nature. It is understood to be a law so universal that all with-

out exception have to submit to it; so essentially good and right, that never under any circumstances can it be transgressed without crime; so inviolable, that if disturbed it must always be restored by heavy atonements; so far above, and independent of, any one's free will, that no power can abolish and no resolution can change it. All these attributes perfectly coincide with those of the moral law, and hence prove justice to be within its compass. Moreover, reason, from the principles of which justice so necessarily follows, and the dictates of which so imperiously enjoin it on all mankind, is the voice of God, the promulgation of the law which He has conceived and sanctioned from eternity. Justice, therefore, is not merely an ideal system based on the Deity; it is, in reality, a law ordained and promulgated by God, a real object of His thought, a plan drawn up by His wisdom, and a decree irrevocably resolved on by His will.

168. Let us see more in particular how it enters into the eternal law, and how, as such, it is conceived and willed by the Supreme Ruler. The eternal law lays down the order of rational creation required by the essence of created intelligence. It first orders the beings endowed with reason to God, their Creator, the ultimate end corresponding to their nature; then it orders them to one another, so, however, that the relations established among them are subservient to the higher order of creation, to God. Here we have to consider the order of man to man required by nature.

What is man, and what relations are consistent with his essence? He is a being complete in

itself, a perfect, intelligent nature, free, and consequently the master of his actions, destined directly to tend to God, the supreme end, and to possess and glorify Him by perfect knowledge and intimate love. He is, therefore, a centre to himself; for all that belongs to him is perfectly and exclusively his own, and he himself is referred to none, inasmuch as, being made directly for the highest end, which he is to pursue freely and with self-determination, he is subordinate to no creature. Below him all other beings essentially refer to an outward centre, because, being unfree and unable to reach the last end by themselves, they must be subservient as means to rational creation. But a rational being so conditioned, complete, free, independent, autocentric, requires by its very essence to have its existence, its activity, and the means thereof inviolable in the midst of all its surrounding fellow-creatures.

Such inviolability of man God cannot but ordain by law when from all eternity He sanctions the right order of rational creation. For thus to be inviolable is the right order for man. Decreeing otherwise, God would contradict Himself in many respects. Human nature demands a certain amount of independence, because it is rational and free, and just as far as it is such it is the image of the Divine Essence. But what is due to the creature as to His own image He cannot possibly deny it. Then it is He that gives to man being, existence, and perfection. Creating and elevating man to such a rank as requires inviolability, He would counteract His own purpose and intention if He did not actually ordain it. For the will to bring into existence a being necessarily

implies also the will to endow it with the prerogatives proper to its nature. Accordingly God, by an eternal decree, invests every man with the moral power, the right, to exact that nobody should interfere with his own, and, conversely, lays on all others the duty to regard this right, the infringement of which is a wrong at once against the Creator and the creature. This decree is of necessity most general and unexceptional. It must invest with the right spoken of the weak as well as the strong; the child, even yet unborn, no less than the adult, because there is in all of them the same rational nature; and it must lay correlative duties on all, even on those who are highest in power and abilities; for, as to their nature, they are not above the most wretched human being.

169. Thus, by God's eternal law, man is like a sovereign, independent and inviolable. However, he is such only with regard to his ultimate end and the means conducive to it, which either are given to him by creation, or acquired by himself. But by creation he has not all the necessary means for his proper activity, nor can he acquire them all by himself. Finite and weak as his nature is, he cannot obtain several of them except by permanent co-operation with others. To this he is forced by his own insufficient nature. For social impulses and tendencies are innate in man, and the individual organisms are so formed as to correspond to one another. Nature, therefore, imperatively demands society, and God wills it by the very fact that He has shaped nature after this manner. Hence the social order necessarily becomes a part of His eternal law. Society, however, to exist and to work permanently, must be con-

veniently organized, and, therefore, be divided into head and members. The head must be furnished with efficient power to reduce the members to unity in operation, and to exact from them all that is necessary to reach the social end—that is, to procure those goods which cannot be obtained but by co-operation. Thus the eternal law sanctioning the right order, the order required by nature, confers on the head of society the power of enjoining rules of action, and lays on the members the obligation to obey the rules enjoined.

170. The authority of society over its members is strictly measured by the end for which it is instituted. Society is not made to abolish the personal rights consequent on personality, freedom, and the destination to the immediate attainment of the supreme good; on the contrary, it exists only for the purpose of protecting the individuals and providing them with the means necessary for suitable free activity. Accordingly, it has no authority to trench upon their rights —to tax or benefit them arbitrarily. Rather the end of social existence, on the one hand, requires society to appoint public officers, to deal out the common burdens necessary for the public welfare, and to distribute the common goods acquired by co-operation, according to merit and desert; and, on the other hand, entitles its members to be so governed. Manifestly, the duties of governments and rights of subjects form part of the order which God, in accordance with His Wisdom, has decreed from all eternity.

Consequently the eternal law includes a charter of rights written in the Divine Mind, by which all rational creation is reduced to such perfect order and

harmony that both individuals and society are preserved and guarded in their existence and congenial activity, and at the same time directed to the ultimate end; a charter older than any state, even older than mankind itself, because sanctioned before all time; a charter so necessary that not only no human power can abolish it, but God Himself, in accordance with His infinite perfection, cannot but will it from all eternity and maintain it unchanged.

171. This charter is, however, not written merely in the Divine Intellect; an indelible copy of it exists in our own mind. For our reason is a created participation of the Divine Reason. Therefore, as was stated above, it is the promulgation of the eternal law, and, consequently, the manifestation of the rights eternally sanctioned, which are contained therein as an integrant part. The eternal rights thus, like the moral law, become innate and natural, inasmuch as their promulgation, taken actively, is the very act by which rational nature is created, and, taken passively, is identical with reason, the formal constituent of human nature.

Hence it will be understood that these rights are manifested to us in the same manner as the moral law. In their general outlines they coincide with the universal principles of practical reason: in their details they are necessary conclusions drawn from the latter. Such is the way in which our mind perceives truth, and guides our actions by the perception of it. In fact, from the very dawning of our reason we full well understand what in many instances we owe to others, and what they may claim from us as their own. The understanding of such particular rights and

claims is clear to us, because there is a principle involved in them which, with its light, powerfully strikes our mind. When the various principles thus enlightening us are, later on, when reason has matured, abstracted and expressed in a general form, they present themselves as self-evident, universal truths, and as sources of the widest practical knowledge. The deductions drawn from them regulate all our conduct towards others. Reduced to order and method, they constitute a code of rights serving as a standard for individual and social life—a rational system which is a striking evidence of the greatness of the human mind. Applied by the individual to his particular actions, they form a part of our conscience, and one that indeed directs us quite perceptibly and prompts us most forcibly. For the right relations that ought to exist among men are in many cases so distinctly understood, even by less cultivated minds, that their knowledge can scarcely ever be obliterated. The duties towards God may be disregarded and more or less ignored, though not without guilt; His very idea may be dimmed and distorted. But who is ever ignorant of rights he has, and obligations under which others are towards him with regard to life, security, liberty, reputation, and property?

The reason why, in this respect, every one's judgment is so clear and decisive lies not so much in the fuller knowledge of human nature, which we daily gain by experience, as in the necessity of well-ordered social life, to feel which the Author of nature has especially adapted us.

It is these principles naturally issuing from reason and throwing light on our relations with other men

that Christian ethics calls the sense of justice. And, indeed, they constitute a powerful and lofty sentiment. They do not arise from lower animal instincts or from sensuous experience, which we have in common with brutes, but from the spiritual element in man, which is a reflection of the Divine Reason. They do not lead us blindly, but afford us a clear insight into the nature of right and wrong. They reveal to us an irresistible power inherent in rights, and an absolute necessity of the correlative duties, the neglect of which is a crime deserving the severest penalties. The emotions and affections called forth by them are noble and disinterested; for they are no other than the love of the good and the just, and respect for others on account of the dignity conferred on them by their Creator. The motives which they suggest to us in exacting our rights are pure and unselfish, consisting in the desire to maintain our freedom and the possession of the means necessary to reach our supreme end.

172. It is scarcely needful to set forth at any length the attributes of justice so explained in Christian ethics. Its sacredness, its absolute necessity, its unchangeableness, are plain enough and have been sufficiently insisted on. Its universal knowableness is, from what has been thus far said, patent to every intelligent reader. The rights and duties constituting justice are not only at all times and in all places the same, because founded proximately on human nature and ultimately on the Divine Essence, but are also known in all ages and to all nations, since human reason itself is their promulgation. Reason is always the same light that illumines all mankind and bestows knowledge, which is originally pure and darkened by

no error. The first principles into which it issues are self-evident necessary truths, which cannot be unknown to anybody on whom intellectual light has dawned; its secondary principles, obviously deduced from the first, are no less true and necessary and known to all whose mind is not totally biased. Only remoter deductions decrease in clearness and certainty. In reality, we see certain rights recognized among all nations, civilized and uncivilized; others, on the contrary, acknowledged by the civilized only. In this sense we may truly say with Cicero, that the knowledge of justice is bestowed on all to whom reason has been given.[2]

Another attribute is no less obvious. The rights divinely sanctioned, because demanded by the right order of nature and manifested by the evident principles of reason, are in time previous and in force superior to those established by positive enactments. What institution could ever prevail against God's eternal law? They are, moreover, the standard to which every positive right, to be valid, must necessarily conform. For, being principles of reason, they are the foundation on which all sound and just legislation rests, and the source from which all laws binding in conscience must be derived.

173. Lastly, according to Christian ethics justice is sustained by the strongest possible sanction. The infringement of natural rights is a transgression of the moral law to be avenged in the life to come with the greatest of all penalties, the loss of the supreme good. But, besides this, rights have a quite peculiar sanction also during earthly life.

[2] De legibus, i., 12, 33.

The possibility of pursuing the ultimate end in the proper manner can never be wanting, consistently with the wisdom and bounty of God. For an end impossible to be attained is a plain absurdity. But rights have been established for the special purpose of securing to man the possibility to tend to his ultimate goal with the freedom and self-determination proper to his nature. They protect his existence with its belongings, and enable him to act with freedom; they give unity and suitable operation to society, which procures for us the means which we cannot severally obtain. Rights must consequently be efficient. They cannot as to their effect depend on the will of those who are prompted by passion or by vice to robbery, fraud, oppression, and murder. The claims involved in them must be complied with, and the duties imposed by them must be fulfilled during this earthly existence. Hence the obligation for government not only to enact, but also to enforce the laws necessary for the public welfare; hence the permission granted every individual, not only to demand protection of all his rights, but, if this cannot be obtained, to use coercion against those who resist his rightful claims. Thus man's independence is completed, and the employment of physical power, if necessary, is made lawful in order to defend his freedom against every unjust assailant. It is this property of rights that is called their coerciveness, a property universally recognized and guaranteed by the laws of all civilized nations.[3]

In the preceding chapter we have shown that justice goes to establish a sacred, inviolable, absolutely

[3] Th. Meyer, Institut. Juris Nat., vol. i., pp. 374, 376.

necessary order, originating in reason and made for man endowed with reason; that it is prior to any human institution and the type of human laws; that the rights involved in it must absolutely be respected, and that it equally protects the existence and the freedom of all without exception. How fully have not the teachings of Christian ethics brought out this idea? What necessity and sacredness do they not predicate of justice? How well do they not trace it back ultimately to Supreme Reason, and proximately to human reason? What a strong bulwark of freedom do they not make of it for all men? And how consistently do they not deduce all these properties from its nature?

174. There are, however, two exceptions made to the Christian view. It is said that the general principles of reason, though they regard justice, are far too vague and indefinite to be of themselves a source of any certain, well-defined rights, and that nature itself gives individuals no power to enforce their claims to what they consider as their own. And yet definiteness and coerciveness are necessary attributes of rights. It is hence inferred that rights are not established by nature, but by the state only, because the state alone is able to define them by its law and enforce them by its strong hand.

We first deny that from the general principles of practical reason no definite conclusions can be drawn respecting justice. There are completely determined individual rights which any one who has the perfect use of reason clearly apprehends as necessary, independently of any civil law or political institution. Such are, for instance, the rights to preserve

one's own life, and to defend it when unjustly attacked, to acquire and to possess all the means necessary for this purpose, as well as for the development of one's faculties, and for the attainment of the ultimate end, hence the right of property, the right to follow the dictates of one's conscience, if clear and certain, the right to make contracts, and the right to enjoy external liberty. Speaking of the right of self-defence Cicero says very well:

"This is a law not written, but born with us, which we have not learned or received by tradition, but which we have taken and sucked in and imbibed from nature; a law which we were not taught, but to which we were made; to which we were not trained, but which is ingrained in us—namely, that if our life be in danger from plots or from open violence, or from the weapons of robbers or enemies, every means of securing our safety is honorable."[4]

Also within the family there are rights older than the state. The authority of the husband and the parent and the imperative claims of the wife have not been created by any civil law; they existed long before there were rulers and lawgivers.

Nay, there are public rights which must be fully and universally recognized previously to the existence and the functions of the state. The right of the government to rule must be evident to reason before any of its laws can have binding force; and the rights of the subjects to protection and to an equitable share in the common goods must be regarded as valid of themselves and superior to any state enactment, if the government is not to degenerate into tyranny, and civil society is not to end in anarchy.[5]

[4] Pro Milone, ch. 4, n. 10.

[5] Th. Meyer, Institut. Juris Nat., vol. i., pp. 446–461.

True it is that some rights, contained in the general principles of reason, cannot be determined with certainty by mere deduction, and therefore must be determined by legislation. From this, however, it follows, not that there are no natural rights, but that besides them there are also positive rights sanctioned by human laws.

175. Nor are natural rights made coercive by the state. The contrary opinion rests on an obvious confusion of conceptions. It takes coerciveness for physical force: for this alone is what the state generally affords us. The coerciveness of right, however, is the attribute of a moral power, and is consequently itself of a moral nature. It is the permission to enforce compliance with our rightful claims. But such permission is not primarily granted by the state; it is, as we have seen, evidently contained in the eternal law of God and manifested by the light of reason. Nor does it accrue to rights only when those to whom they belong become strong and powerful, or perish again when they become weak and helpless, or when they are oppressed. It is necessarily connected with the nature itself of perfect rights, being demanded by the end for which they are established, and is, therefore, of eternal origin. The possibility only of making use of actual coercion depends on physical strength and power. This possibility, indeed, arises and disappears, increases and decreases, as all earthly things do; it may be wanting at one time and be forthcoming at another time. But to render it steady and to afford it to all without exception, is one of the ends for which the state is divinely instituted.

The solution of these two difficulties clearly shows in what relation civil society stands to justice. There are, and there must be, natural rights, clear and well-defined, before any state exists or can exist. Still, the state is necessary to complete the order of justice. Reason alone cannot deduce remote conclusions from self-evident principles with compelling evidence, nor are the rules which it dictates as necessary always fully determined. And yet, both in society and among individuals the mutual relations respecting each one's property must be certain, fixed, and definite. Then, though certain natural rights exist beyond all doubt, many individuals have not the means to enforce regard for them, however clear their claims to coercion may be. Such enforcement, however, ought to be possible, and must generally be exercised, if security, freedom, and order are not to yield to violence, selfishness, hatred, and avarice. Consequently, a strong authority, which all must obey, is necessary both to enact rights by positive laws, where natural reason is insufficient to determine them, and to protect rights when reason has established them, by lending an irresistible arm for their enforcement.[6]

176. The theory expounded is undoubtedly one of the chief merits of Christian ethics. Justice, as explained by it, is a wonderful and perfect order of rational creation. While it unites all into society for the sake of harmonious co-operation, it guards the freedom of each like an impregnable stronghold, and furnishes every one with the means to unfold his activity. And while thus all-embracing and all-protecting, it is so sacred and sublime that all must

[6] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., i.-ii., qu. 95, art. 2.

revere it, and so firm that nothing can prevail against it. We ought, however, to bear well in mind that justice is so grand, firm, and sacred for no other cause than that it rests on a theistic basis. By the old philosophy, man is not looked on as the last offspring of brute creation, but is regarded as a creature of God, shaped after the Creator's likeness and animated with a soul which is the likeness of Divine Reason. Hence, every human being, however frail and feeble in appearance, is rendered inviolable and vested with sacred prerogatives. Nor are rights and laws deduced by Christian ethics from the conditions of earthly existence; they are derived from God's infinite wisdom and holiness, and so centre in Him who is all order, beauty, and righteousness.

CHAPTER XV.

ON BENEFICENCE.

177. Beneficence is conceived also by the modern philosophers as a necessary complement of the moral order.

178. Nevertheless, with the exception of A. Comte, they do not regard it as a certain duty established by any law for the time being. To the utilitarians it is an ideal which, before the height of evolution is reached, cannot fall under obligation.

179. Herbert Spencer finds it extremely difficult to determine the obligation of beneficence. However, he tries to mark out some limits within which beneficence is obligatory, and again limits within which it is forbidden.

180. Within the family group most is to be given where least is deserved, if desert is measured by worth. Outside the family group such benefits must be conferred as are required by the normal conditions of society and the fulness of egoistic satisfaction in the associated state.

181. Three kinds of beneficent acts are noted as forbidden: those which hinder the maintenance and evolution of human life; those which lessen the capacity of the benefactor to pursue his own or others' happiness; those which by their nature tend to foster selfishness in society.

182. Only in the normal state of mankind will beneficence become a clearly-defined necessity owing to a law inherent in man himself. This law is constituted by the sympathetic feeling to which beneficence owes its rise and growth.

183. The utilitarian theory fails to establish beneficence as a law.

184. The sense of beneficence, as a part of the moral faculty,

cannot grow out of the lower stages of evolution ; it is, therefore, only by a vicious circle that J. S. Mill arrives at an internal sentiment leading spontaneously to beneficent acts.

185. In Herbert Spencer's theory beneficence is proved to be obligatory neither within nor without the family ; it is, on the contrary, shown to be immoral nearly in every case, and particularly when it is needed most.

186. The sympathetic sentiment which, in Herbert Spencer's opinion, will constitute the law of beneficence in the normal state, is a fiction ; but even were it to exist, it would be thoroughly egoistic.

187. There are three kinds of love which induce man to do good to others : the love of self (egoism), the love of humanity (philanthropy), the love of man for the sake of God (charity).

188. Christian ethics proves charity to be a strict duty contained in the moral law.

189. From charity flows beneficence abundant, unlimited and well-ordered.

177. Two universal phenomena are most remarkable in the material world —attraction and repulsion. By repulsion the numberless atoms are severally kept in their peculiar spheres of existence and activity ; by attraction they are united into bodies, and the bodies into the harmonious system of the universe. We meet with two similar phenomena in the moral world. There, too, is a kind of attraction and repulsion ; for every being endowed with reason and with freedom is striving to maintain its individuality, and yet, at the same time, all are tending to enter into union with one another. Plainly it is justice that regulates both these tendencies, since, as far as it is commutative, it is the protection of each one's individual existence and freedom, and, as far as it is legal, it unifies society. There are, however, human needs

which call for private, and not for public assistance; for assistance unrewarded on the part of the needy and uncontrollable by any civil law. There are also inclinations implanted in the human heart which prompt us to far greater sacrifices of self and to much more tender affections than any public authority could ordain. Consequently there must be a closer union among men than justice could create, caused by a generous and benevolent love which, working under a higher law than that of equity, bestows gratuitous benefits, and links man to man with the strongest and yet the gentlest ties. Only when this union is brought about is society accomplished, and only when this love has become prevalent is the source of the sweetest social happiness opened.

The new moralists, fully aware of this truth, have regarded beneficence as the height of morality. Accordingly they have not only discussed its nature and its motives, but urged also its necessity, and as they boast, far more effectually than Christian philosophers could do. Whether their glorying in this respect is well founded, and whether their theory of beneficence is sound and consistent, is the last question that falls within the compass of our treatise.

178. Their theory is plain enough and will not require much study. Herbert Spencer gives us a well-defined idea of beneficence. It consists, as he says, in spontaneous efforts to further the welfare of others, or in the gratuitous rendering of services in order to facilitate and complete life. It is both negative and positive. Negative beneficence is "a self-repression to avoid giving pain," or "the abstaining from actions which, though not unjust or aggressive, still

give pain, being unkind now in deed, now in word." Positive beneficence is "an expenditure of effort to give pleasure," or is the rendering of services and undergoing of sacrifices not paid for and not required by justice.[1]

The obligation of beneficence might, in the utilitarian system, seem to be subject to no doubts or difficulties. If social happiness is man's ultimate end, it ought certainly to be pursued not only by paid, but also by unpaid efforts and sacrifices. A. Comte, in fact, requires that each man should live for all, and each should be a benefactor of mankind, under the guidance of civil magistrates and the spiritual authority of the priests of humanity. Morality is, in his opinion, identical with extreme universal altruism. Rights, as being essentially egoistic, are to be denied to individuals. Instead of private property a far advanced form of communism is to be introduced. The nation is to be divided into patricians, who are invested with the civil power and, as bankers, have all capital in their hands, and into proletarians, who own but the means necessary for labor and receive as wages either a fixed salary or a share in the produce. Inheritance is to be abolished; the patricians being obliged to transmit their possessions, which, in reality, are public property, not to their descendants, but to the worthiest in the community.

Commonly the utilitarians do not share the rigor of the founder of positivism. J. S. Mill, though proposing general happiness as man's last end, teaches quite a mitigated altruism. An action, to be moral, needs not to be directed to common happiness

[1] Data of Ethics, §§ 107, 110.

as its end; it suffices that, while it benefits individuals, it is not opposed to the public good. And usually, as he says, morally good conduct is positively beneficial only to few persons with whom we come into contact. True, universal beneficence is to him the climax, the ideal of morality, for which men ought to strive, and the standard to which laws and social institutions ought to become ever more conformable.

"In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbor as one's self, constitute the ideal of utilitarian morality. As the means of making the nearest approach to this ideal, utility would enjoin, first, that the laws and social arrangement should place the happiness, or (as speaking practically it may be called) the interest of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interests of the whole, and, secondly, that education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole; especially between his own happiness and the practice of such modes of conduct, positive and negative, as regard for the universal happiness prescribes; so that not only he may be unable to conceive the possibility of happiness to himself consistently with conduct opposed to the general good, but also that a direct impulse to promote the general good may be in every individual one of the habitual motives of action, and the sentiments connected therewith may fill a large and prominent place in every human being's sentient existence."[2]

But ideals, though always to be kept in view, are not obligatory laws, for the reason that their attainment is for most men too difficult. Least of all can they be considered as laws in the evolutionary theory, because the perfection of the higher stages, and above all that of the climax of evolution, is for the lower stages a sheer impossibility. Hence our actions are

[2] Utilitarianism, chap. ii.

not noted as morally bad on the ground that they do not reach the moral ideal, but, on the contrary, are often regarded as good, though yet at a good distance from it. Also J. S. Mill looks on conduct as moral, though it be far from being universally beneficent.

Unquestionably, then, beneficence, as above described, cannot be considered as a duty in the present stage of evolution. In fact, according to the utilitarian theory itself, it belongs only to optional morality, which is to be encouraged by public opinion, or, as A. Bain says, by the law of honor. No utilitarian philosopher has as yet thought of making it a strict law, which might be enforced by public authority. This would, in the opinion of all, imply extreme tyranny. Only when the height of evolution will be approached, will universal beneficence become a necessity, not, however, owing to any external law enacted by authority, but owing to the completely developed moral sense. We are not even told by the positivists whether and to what extent private beneficence is a duty. No moral principle is laid down that regulates it or determines its obligation. No public law could be made by governments to urge it on their subjects. It may, at most, be recommended by public opinion; but it lacks definiteness and sanction, which two properties are essential to moral obligation. Nor are the sentiments of love and benevolence prescribed by the new moral law; for the internal feelings, the springs and motives of action, have nothing to do with the morality of conduct.

179. In still greater perplexity are the egoistic hedonists. Mr. Spencer openly confesses the diffi-

culty in which he finds himself to determine when and how far beneficence is a duty during the transitional stages. He first admits that "of the two subdivisions into which beneficence falls, the negative and the positive, neither can be specialized." Then he sets forth in detail the numerous and complicated problems which arise in the practice of either. Concerning negative beneficence he says:

"Pain is sometimes given to others simply by maintaining an equitable claim; pain is at other times given by refusing a request, and again at other times by maintaining an opinion. In these and numerous cases suggested by them, there have to be answered the questions whether, to avoid inflicting pain, personal feelings should be sacrificed, and how far sacrificed. Again, in cases of another class, pain is given, not by a passive course, but by an active course. How far shall a person who has misbehaved be grieved by showing aversion to him? Shall one whose action is to be reprobated have the reprobation expressed to him, or shall nothing be said? Is it right to annoy by condemning a prejudice which another displays? These and kindred queries have to be answered after taking into account the immediate pain given, the possible benefit caused by giving it, and the possible evil caused by not giving it. In solving problems of this class, the only help Absolute Ethics gives, is by enforcing the consideration that inflicting more pain than is necessitated by proper self-regard, or by the desire of another's benefit, or by the maintenance of a general principle, is unwarranted."[3]

The rule, however, pointed out in the last words cannot be meant to give a certain solution of the proposed questions. This must be evident to every one who remembers Mr. Spencer's often-repeated assertion that the claims of self and others, of egoism and altruism, are, in the transitional stages, in perpetual conflict and cannot be reconciled but by inconsistent, temporary, and indefinite compromises.

[3] Data of Ethics, § 110.

With regard to the practice of positive beneficence he is embarrassed by similar perplexing questions.

"Under its relative form, positive beneficence presents numerous problems, alike important and difficult, admitting only of temporal solutions. How far is self-sacrifice for another's benefit to be carried on in each case?—a question which must be answered differently according to the character of the other, the need of the other, and the various claims of self and belongings which have to be met. To what extent, under given circumstances, shall private welfare be subordinated to public welfare?—a question to be answered after considering the importance of the end and the seriousness of the sacrifice. What benefit and what detriment will result from gratuitous aid yielded to another?—a question in each case implying an estimate of probabilities. Is there any unfair treatment of sundry others involved by more than fair treatment of this one other? Up to what limit may help be given to the existing generation of the inferior, without entailing mischief on future generations of the superior? Evidently to these and many kindred questions included in this division of Relative Ethics, approximately true answers only may be given."[4]

Herbert Spencer has promised to shed light on these perplexing questions in a special treatise, yet to appear, on "Negative and Positive Beneficence." In the meantime we must content ourselves with the doctrine which he has laid down in his philosophical works thus far published. In these he has already marked out some limits within which beneficence becomes a duty, and others within which it is illicit and immoral.

180. On offspring not yet grown up benefits must be conferred on a principle contrary to that of justice.

"During immaturity benefits received must be inversely proportionate to capacities possessed. Within the family-

[4] Data of Ethics, § 110.

group most must be given where least is deserved, if desert is measured by worth."[5]

This rule enunciates a necessary condition for the preservation of the species; for "if among the young benefits were proportioned to efficiency, the species would disappear forthwith."

Outside of the family such benefits must be conferred as the normal condition of society and the fullness of egoistic satisfactions in the associated state require.

"A society, like a species, survives only on condition that each generation of its members shall yield to the next benefits equivalent to those it has received from the last. And this implies that care for the family must be supplemented by care for the society. Fullness of egoistic satisfactions in the associated state, depending primarily on maintenance of normal relation between efforts expended and benefits obtained, which underlies all life, implies an altruism which both prompts equitable conduct and prompts the enforcing of equity. The well-being of each is involved with the well-being of all in sundry other ways. Whatever conduces to their vigor concerns him; for it diminishes the cost of everything he buys. Whatever conduces to their freedom from disease concerns him; for it diminishes his own liability to disease. Whatever raises their intelligence concerns him; for inconveniences are daily entailed on him by others' ignorance or folly. Whatever raises their moral characters concerns him; for at every turn he suffers from the average unconscientiousness."

"Much more directly do his egoistic satisfactions depend on those altruistic activities which enlist the sympathies of others. By alienating those around, selfishness loses the unbought aid they can render, shuts out a wide range of social enjoyments, and fails to receive those exaltations of pleasure and mitigations of pain, which come from men's fellow-feeling with those they like."

"Lastly, undue egoism defeats itself by bringing on incapacity for happiness. Purely egoistic gratifications are rendered less keen by satiety, even in the earlier part of life, and

[5] Data of Ethics, § 75; Justice, § 2.

almost disappear in the later: the less satiating gratifications of altruism are missed throughout life, and especially in that latter part when they largely replace egoistic gratifications; and there is a lack of susceptibility to æsthetic pleasures of the higher orders." [6]

Rules directing how to do good to others outside the family are, indeed, established on these principles. They are, however, not really laws of beneficence, but rather of justice and self-love, since doing good according to them is not in the least gratuitous or unpaid.

181. Quite positive is Mr. Spencer's doctrine concerning the limits within which beneficence is immoral. Three classes of beneficent acts are, as he says, forbidden. The first class includes those which hinder the maintenance and evolution of human life; the second, those which lessen the capacity of the benefactor to pursue his own and others' happiness; the third, those which by their nature tend to foster selfishness in society and so diminish beneficence. Evolution is the primary end to be pursued, and conditions necessary for its attainment are the fundamental laws of morality, which under no circumstances can be transgressed. Hence any kind of beneficence by which the propagation of the species is interfered with, or men are prevented from reaping the consequences of their nature and their conduct, good or evil, is essentially immoral.

"The law that each creature shall take the benefits and the evils of its own nature, be they those derived from ancestry or those due to self-produced modifications, has been the law under which life has been evolved thus far; and it must continue to be the law, however much further life may evolve. Whatever qualifications this natural course of action may now or here-

[6] Data of Ethics, § 81.

after undergo, are qualifications that cannot, without fatal results, essentially change it. Any arrangements which in a considerable degree prevent superiority from profiting by the rewards of superiority, or shield inferiority from the evils it entails—any arrangements which tend to make it as well to be inferior as to be superior; are arrangements diametrically opposed to the progress of organization and the reaching of a higher life."[7]

Beneficence, therefore, which is pushed so far as to hinder marriage, or the generation of healthy offspring, is to be reprobated.

"Pushed to extremes, sacrifice of self for the benefit of others leads occasionally to death before the ordinary period of marriage; leads sometimes to abstention from marriage, as in sisters of charity; leads sometimes to an ill-health or a loss of attractiveness which prevents marriage; leads sometimes to non-acquirement of the pecuniary means needed for marriage; and in all these cases, therefore, the unusually altruistic leave no descendants. Where the postponement of personal welfare to the welfare of others has not been carried so far as to prevent marriage, it yet not unfrequently occurs that the physical degradation resulting from years of self-neglect causes infertility; so that, again, the most altruistically-natured leave no like-natured posterity. And then in less marked and more numerous cases, the resulting enfeeblement shows itself by the production of relatively weak offspring, of whom some die early, while the rest are less likely than usual to transmit the parental type to future generations. Inevitably, then, by this dying out of the especially unegoistic there is prevented that desirable mitigation of egoism in the average nature which would else have taken place. Such disregard of self as brings down bodily vigor below the normal level, eventually produces in the society a counterbalancing excess of regard for self."[8]

If, according to the fundamental law of justice, the less adapted must take upon themselves the results of their inferiority so as not to be allowed to shoulder them off, they are, of course, excluded from assist-

[7] Data of Ethics, § 69. [8] Ibid., § 73.

ance in their needs and infirmities. Their survival would be a curse, whereas their extermination is a blessing, to the human race.

The duty incumbent on every one not to sacrifice or diminish, by bestowing benefits, his own capacity of pursuing personal and general happiness, is made good by the following reasoning:

"Such egoism as preserves a vivacious mind in a vigorous body furthers the happiness of descendants, whose inherited constitutions make the labors of life easy and its pleasures keen; while, conversely, unhappiness is entailed on posterity by those who bequeath them constitutions injured by self-neglect. Again, the individual whose well-conserved life shows itself in overflowing spirits, becomes, by his mere existence, a source of pleasure to all around; while the depression which commonly accompanies ill-health diffuses itself through family and among friends. A further contrast is that, whereas one who has been duly regardful of self retains the power of being helpful to others, there results from self-abnegation in excess, not only an inability to help others, but the infliction of positive burdens on them." [9]

Selfishness may be fostered by beneficence in a twofold way, directly and indirectly. Directly, in that it generates greediness and undue reliance on others; indirectly, by diminishing the number of the altruistic. The latter effect was already spoken of in the preceding paragraphs. Direct increasing of selfishness by beneficence is illustrated in the following passage:

"That one man may yield up to another a gratification, it is needful that the other shall accept it; and where the gratification is of a kind to which their respective claims are equal, or which is no more required by the one than by the other, acceptance implies a readiness to get gratification at another's cost. The circumstances and the needs of the two being alike, the transaction involves as much culture of egoism in the last as it

[9] Data of Ethics, § 74.

involves culture of altruism in the first. It is true that, not unfrequently, difference between their means, or difference between their appetites for a pleasure which the one has had often and the other rarely, divests the acceptance of this character; and it is true that in the other cases the benefactor manifestly takes so much pleasure in giving pleasure, that the sacrifice is partial, and the reception of it is not wholly selfish. But to see the effect above indicated, we must exclude such inequalities and consider what happens where wants are approximately alike, and where the sacrifices, not reciprocated at intervals, are perpetually on one side." [10]

Still more blamable, we must conclude, would be the beneficent act of him who sacrifices a gratification or advantage for one who is in less need of it than himself. The gist of all these statements undoubtedly is that, during the transitional stages, the duty of beneficence is seldom clear, mostly uncertain and indefinite. The claims of self and others are unsettled; the limits within which benefits must be conferred are very narrow; the limits, on the contrary, within which conferring them is immoral, very wide and constantly varying.

182. Only in the normal state of mankind will beneficence become a clearly-defined necessity, owing to an internal law, without being any longer liable to injurious excesses. Adaptation to the environment will then be perfect, and, in consequence, beneficent action will be highly pleasurable, mediately and immediately, and will, on account of the pleasure which it yields, be spontaneously performed.[11] The sufferings of mankind will be insignificant, and the necessaries of life will easily be provided. The opportunities for giving aid will be fewer and smaller, and benefits will either be returned or not accepted at all.

[10] Data of Ethics, § 73.

[11] Ibid., § 92.

In a word, everything will contribute both to render beneficence pleasant and to keep it within due bounds.

The source from which beneficence springs in such perfection is sympathy. Gradually increasing, as the moral sense in general does, sympathetic feeling prompts man to do good to others by the pleasures which it affords, and at the same time regulates beneficent actions. The growth and final perfection of sympathy rests on the following principles:

"Faculties which, under given conditions, yield partly pain and partly pleasure, cannot develop beyond the limit at which they yield a surplus of pleasure: if beyond that limit more pain than pleasure results from the exercise of them, their growth must be arrested. Through sympathy both these forms of feeling are excited. Now a pleasurable consciousness is aroused on witnessing pleasure; now a painful consciousness is aroused on witnessing pain. Hence, if beings around him habitually manifest pleasure, and but rarely pain, sympathy yields to its possessor a surplus of pleasure; while, contrariwise, if little pleasure is ordinarily witnessed and much pain, sympathy yields a surplus of pain to its possessor. The average development of sympathy must, therefore, be regulated by the average manifestations of pleasure and pain in others. If the life usually led under given social conditions is such that suffering is daily inflicted, or is daily displayed by associates, sympathy cannot grow. . . . On the other hand, if the social state is such that manifestations of pleasure predominate, sympathy will increase; since sympathetic pleasures, adding to the totality of pleasures enhancing vitality, conduce to the physical prosperity of the most sympathetic, and since the pleasures of sympathy exceeding its pains in all, lead to an exercise of it which strengthens it."

"Along with habitual militancy, and under the adapted type of social organization, sympathy cannot develop to any considerable height." [12]

But besides war and its attending evil consequences, also other sources of miseries, particularly

[12] Data of Ethics, § 93.

over-population, must be removed, before sympathy can considerably increase.

"While the rate of multiplication continues so to exceed the rate of mortality as to cause pressure on the means of subsistence, there must continue to result much unhappiness; either from balked affections or from overwork and stinted means. Only as fast as fertility diminishes, which we have seen it must do along with further mental development (*Principles of Biology*, §§ 367–377), can there go on such diminution of the labors required for efficiently supporting self and family, that they will not constitute a displeasurable tax on the energies."

By the predominance of intellectual activity, fertility will be lowered so much that the number of children in each family will amount to only two or three.

"Gradually, and only gradually, as these various causes of unhappiness become less, can sympathy become greater. . . . . As the moulding and remoulding of man and society into mutual fitness progresses, and the pains caused by unfitness decrease, sympathy can increase in presence of the pleasures that come from fitness." [13]

In the meantime, also, the development of language, of intelligence, and social feelings will positively contribute to the growth of sympathy. And in proportion as it thus grows in strength, sympathy yields greater and richer pleasures.

"It was pointed out that, supposing them to be consistent with the continuance of life, there are no activities which may not become sources of pleasure, if surrounding conditions require persistence in them. And here it is to be added, as a corollary, that if the conditions require any class of activities to be relatively great, there will arise a relatively great pleasure accompanying that class of activities. . . . That, alike for public welfare and private welfare, sympathy is essential, we have seen. We have seen that co-operation and the benefits which it brings to each and all, become high in proportion as

[13] Data of Ethics, § 93.

the altruistic, that is the sympathetic, interests extend. The actions prompted by fellow-feeling are thus to be counted among those demanded by social conditions. They are actions which maintenance and further development of social organization tend ever to increase; and, therefore, actions with which there will be joined an increasing pleasure. From the laws of life it must be concluded that unceasing social discipline will so mould human nature, that eventually sympathetic pleasure will be spontaneously pursued to the fullest extent advantageous to each and all. The scope of altruistic activities will not exceed the desire for altruistic satisfactions." [14]

At last beneficence practiced from sympathy will become in ordinary life a pleasure not mixed with any pain and requiring no sacrifice.

"In its ultimate form, altruism will be the achievement of gratifications through sympathy with those gratifications of others which are mainly produced by their activities of all kinds successfully carried on—sympathetic gratification, which costs the receiver nothing, but is a gratis addition to his egoistic gratifications." [15]

183. So much information, it would seem, has now been afforded as can reasonably be demanded to pass judgment on the new theories of beneficence. We need not treat of A. Comte's doctrine in particular, as scarcely anything of it has been adopted by the utilitarians and agnostics. It is too evidently the grave of personal freedom to meet with hearty approval. Still, it cannot be denied that, if happiness or the progress of mankind is supposed to be man's ultimate end, Comte's theory is consistent, however great the tyranny which it advocates. If other positivists deviate from it in this point, in order to redeem freedom, they do so at the cost of consistency, thus proving the unsoundness of the principles from which they start. With such damaging inconsist-

[14] Data of Ethics, § 95. [15] Ibid., § 97.

ency we must charge J. S. Mill and the English positivists in general, who, though always speaking of general happiness as the supreme end of man and the standard of his conduct, yet fail to establish beneficence, whether general or private, as a moral law. For such is the logical outcome of their teaching. As long as men are in the bonds of egoism, and, therefore, need the strongest incentives to overcome it, they cannot be strictly obliged to practice beneficence. This obligation did not exist during the past ages, it does not generally exist in our present age and will not exist for ages to come. Only then, we are assured, will an internal law come into existence and render beneficence an organic necessity, when mankind shall have physically and morally advanced and approached the state of ultimate perfection.

184. Will such an internal law in fact ever be evolved? According to J. S. Mill's opinion, it would evidently be identical with the moral faculty, the fully developed social sense. But this we have, in a former chapter, shown to be a vicious circle, a chimerical impossibility, as every self-caused effect is. It will not be difficult to prove that the sense of beneficence involves the very same absurdity. The consciousness of common interests and the love of mankind so far advanced as to merge every particular good in the general good, grows and develops only in well-ordered society. But whence is the order of society, that order so perfect that universal love and disinterested beneficence will naturally and with necessity result from it? Justice alone cannot establish it. Commutative and distributive justice preserve and protect only individual existence. Legal justice

obliges the members of society to obey the public laws framed for the common weal: any further sacrifice it cannot, in strictness, demand. This, however, as was said in the beginning of this chapter, implies no beneficence, no motive for or tendency towards it. Only sincere benevolence, attended by forgetfulness of self, only such good-will as is far above that virtue which prompts us to render each his own, can induce us to bestow on others unpaid benefits or to do good to them with the sacrifice of our own interests. But is not such disinterested good-will the very sense of beneficence? Plainly, then, the internal sentiment which spontaneously leads us to do good to others from unselfish motives is supposed to spring from well-ordered society, and at the same time to reduce society to order. It is its own cause and parent. Its existence is not only not accounted for, but is rendered absurd and self-contradictory; its evolution not only proceeds from nothingness, but also is supposed to be accomplished even before it could commence.

Nor can the sentiment of benevolence be awakened and developed by the influence of public opinion or the law of honor. This, again, would be a vicious circle. A strong public opinion recommending beneficence undoubtedly pre-requires love and kindness already implanted in the hearts of men. The effect to be produced is thus the very cause of the influence to be exercised. Moreover, it is to be denied that public opinion is ever of itself sufficient to give rise to genuine benevolence. It may work well enough under conditions which give notoriety to benefits bestowed. But doing good to others in view of the honor or the

advantage to be reaped is not benevolence; it is selfishness under the garb of disinterestedness. Virtuous and generous men practice beneficence of an altogether different kind; they bestow benefits in secret and endeavor to hide their deeds from the eyes of men. This is true and sincere benevolence, such as is needed to mitigate the sufferings of mankind. For what an amount of misery is concealed from the public view and can be alleviated only in secret!

But even that lower kind of beneficence, which does not spring from disinterested motives, is but seldom generated by public opinion. Is it likely that the avaricious will generally be induced to spend money in alms-deeds, or the slothful to take an active part in the care of the sick, or the pleasure-seekers to renounce their enjoyments, in order to assist the needy, for the reputation of charitableness which they may obtain in the town or city in which they live? Passions, habits, prejudices exercise too powerful an influence on man to be outweighed by any expected honor, the loss of which is, for the majority of men, of much less consideration than the sacrifices to be made in order to ward it off, and can, moreover, be compensated in other ways not so repugnant to self-interest.

185. Evidently, the utilitarians have signally failed to establish any obligation of beneficence during the lower stages of evolution, or to prove that kindness and benevolence will finally develop into an internal law which will lead us spontaneously to beneficent action. But, however signal their failure may be, Mr. Spencer's is still more striking. Having confessed the indefiniteness of the compromise be-

tween egoism and altruism, an indefiniteness which is altogether incompatible with obligation, he does not lay down any rules that may help us to disentangle ourselves from doubt and uncertainty. The only sphere in which he regards beneficence, taken in its proper sense, as a duty, is the family, inasmuch as in it benefits have to be conferred on offspring in inverse proportion to capacities possessed. The ground on which he rests the necessity of such a duty is the propagation of the species. Unquestionably, benefits of the kind mentioned are necessary for the continued existence of mankind. But has generation itself and the raising of offspring been convincingly proved to be a necessity for every individual, and under all particular circumstances, and at the cost of any sacrifice? Many ancient philosophers denied it. Neither Spencer nor any other agnostic has as yet established it as an evident moral truth. Nor is it possible to see how it could be firmly established on the ground of hedonistic theories. Consequently, not even the conferring of benefits on the young can be considered as an imperative duty; for if the end is not necessary, the use of the means cannot be obligatory.

The care of aged parents is mentioned by Mr. Spencer as a function peculiar to the normal state, when the conciliation between egoism and altruism will have been achieved.

"An important development of family altruism must be added: the reciprocal care of parents by children during old age—a care becoming lighter and better fulfilled." [16]

During the transitional stages, of course, this care is burdensome and disagreeable, and, at the same time,

[16] Data of Ethics, § 96.

not required for the propagation and evolution of the human race.

Outside the family, the services to be rendered to others are demanded by justice and self-interest; they are, consequently, no beneficent acts. In accordance, then, with Mr. Spencer's theory, an obligation to practice beneficence, though not conclusively proved, exists only within the family-circle, and even there it is restricted to the care of undeveloped offspring. While he has thus narrowed the limits within which beneficence is a duty, he has indefinitely extended the limits within which it is forbidden. Pointing out the kinds of beneficent acts which must be regarded as immoral, he forbids the conferring of benefits on the less adapted, they being bound in justice to bear the consequences of their inferiority, and on those who, by being benefited, might become more selfish. No doubt, the greatest part of mankind are thus precluded from benefits, and most occasions in which kind and generous assistance is needed allow no practice of mercy and charity. Besides, he forbids the kind-hearted to exercise beneficence whenever, by doing good, they might lessen their chance to marry or to generate a healthy offspring, or stunt their ability of benefiting others, either by imperiling their health, or by not developing their faculties, or by lowering their spirits. The rigor of these new rules not only renders a great many beneficent actions immoral, which hitherto have been looked upon as virtuous in a heroic degree, but raises doubts as to the morality of beneficence nearly in every case when its practice requires sacrifices. When, indeed, are we sure that the persons to be benefited do not

belong to the pariah-class of the less adapted, or to those who might become more selfish by our kindness? And, again, when are we positive that, by exerting ourselves for others, we might not in one or the other case do harm to ourselves?

The conclusion to which Mr. Spencer's reasoning leads us is, that during incomplete life beneficence is a duty at most within the family as far as the rearing of offspring requires it, and that, outside the family, it is, in a great many cases, certainly immoral, and may, for good reasons, be regarded as such nearly in every serious instance. Attempting to dispel the doubts which the irreconcilable claims of self and others raise, he has involved every duty in the darkest clouds of uncertainty.

Can we believe the apostle of the understanding when he nevertheless holds that beneficence gradually develops in the course of evolution, and will at last become an irresistible internal law? In a former chapter it was shown that the moral sense cannot come into existence by evolution, because morality, not being urged by obligation and efficient sanction during incomplete life, cannot maintain its ground against the innate human passions. The same holds good of the benevolent sentiment. It cannot develop during the militant régime, as Mr. Spencer says himself; nay, its development would then be deleterious.[17] Nor can it grow in later periods. Its practice is not sustained by obligation—at least not beyond the rearing of offspring. It is, on the contrary, discouraged whenever it involves some sacrifice of self. It is never upheld so as to resist the behest of ego-

[17] Data of Ethics, § 92.

ism; never strengthened by victory over selfish tendencies. It has constantly to yield and to succumb. Or shall egoism, perhaps, though never conquered by generous deeds, but always fostered and strengthened during numberless centuries, at once, in some later stage of evolution, turn into disinterested love, prompting to kind, beneficent action? As long as it remains a self-evident truth that effects must have a sufficient cause, any process of this kind must be rejected by reason as an absurdity.

186. But sympathy, it is said, develops in proportion as the sufferings of man and disorder in society diminish, and leads, when fully developed, quite spontaneously to acts of beneficence. Let us briefly examine how sympathetic feeling determines conduct. It cannot be a motive of any moral act but as far as it yields pleasure, and it cannot be a motive of beneficent action, in the normal state of mankind, but as far as benefiting becomes, through it, a pleasure unalloyed with pain. Two conclusions are necessarily implied in this conception of sympathy as the source of beneficence. First, the benefit conferred on others in obedience to it must require no sacrifice, for else the pleasure obtained from it is not pure and unalloyed. Secondly, the real motive of benefiting others will always consist in the benefactor's own gratification. Both conclusions are admitted by Herbert Spencer nearly in the very words in which we have put them, when he says that altruism in its ultimate form is sympathetic gratification which costs the receiver nothing. Could we conceive a more advanced egoism than conduct described in these few terms? Who is a subtler egoist than he who does good to

others only for his own gratification, and only then when doing so requires no sacrifice from him? Mr. Spencer himself tells us that "altruistic gratifications (*also in the normal state*) must remain, in a transfigured sense, egoistic"—qualifying, however, the assertion by adding: "Yet they will not be egoistically pursued—will not be pursued from egoistic motives. Though pleasure will be gained by giving pleasure, yet the thought of the sympathetic pleasure to be gained will not occupy consciousness, but only the thought of the pleasure given." [18]

The qualification plainly contradicts his own theory. In his opinion nothing presents itself in consciousness as desirable but the pleasurable. Pleasure, therefore, is the formal object of all desire; not, however, the pleasure of others, but the personal pleasure of the agent himself. Consequently the real object had in view, also in benefiting others, is not their gratification, but that of the benefactor. It must be so, indeed, if none but organic faculties are supposed to be in man. For organic perception apprehends good only as pleasurable to the agent himself, and organic appetition pursues only the pleasure of the agent apprehended as good. It must be so, too, if man's ultimate end is thought to consist in subjective happiness; for this is essentially personal, being the fullest gratification of self. We have already seen how pity, one of the chief motives of beneficence, is essentially egoistic. From such considerations it must be understood that hedonism, of whatever kind it be, is compatible with no other than egoistic beneficence.

[18] Data of Ethics, § 95.

What strange contradiction is involved in these few words : Services rendered without recompense, and yet rendered for the gratification of self ; good done to others out of sincere and generous love, and yet done from the love and regard for self ; living for others, and yet always having self in view ! Does not all this mean altruism that is egoism, disinterestedness that is self-interest, self-forgetfulness that is consummate selfishness ?

What, then, in brief, is beneficence, so ostentatiously inculcated by modern ethics ? After its obligation during the transitional stages of incomplete life has been done away with, either because it cannot be proved, owing to its indefiniteness, or because it does not, on account of its sublimity, allow itself to be imposed as a duty on undeveloped man ; it is said to become towards the height of evolution an internal law, which, working irresistibly, but most pleasantly, effects universal happiness. Yet, all the causes which should contribute to its development being unreal and imaginary, it is, when supposed to have reached its ultimate evolution, absolute egoism bearing the name of disinterested altruism.

What modern philosophers call the perfection of social morality has, after careful examination, turned out to be the very reverse of virtue.

187. We have still to inquire whether the theory of beneficence advanced by Christian philosophy has in the course of time become untenable, as modern thinkers say. It will not be denied by any competent judge that the old ethics made it a duty of man to do good to others. But to what extent, by what kind of obligation, and from what motive ? These

are the decisive questions which have to be discussed.

First, Christian ethics awakens in the human heart true and sincere love, from which, as its proper source, all beneficence must proceed. There are, besides the sensuous or organic love, which is common to all sentient beings, two other kinds of love, which are peculiar to man as a rational being. We may, not by the senses, but by reason conceive the stupendous greatness of human nature; the power of its faculties, intellect and will, unlimited in their range, never resting in the pursuit of the true and the good; the spirituality and immortality of the soul, its principal constituent; the beauty and the wonderful attributes even of the body, animated by the immortal spirit. Whoever so conceives the perfection of our nature can and must love it sincerely and affectionately; for he conceives it as a most worthy object. The love thus enkindled, very appropriately termed philanthropy, is universal, spiritual and disinterested. Yet, be it ever so sublime, it will lose its strength and vigor whenever experience shows us man degraded by vice and shameful conduct; and be it ever so conformable to reason, it cannot be conceived as obligatory, if a Divine Lawgiver is ignored or not positively acknowledged.

But there is yet a higher and nobler love. Beyond human there is the Divine Nature, infinite in perfection, the source of all that is good, sublime, and amiable in man. We are able to know God to some extent and to love Him accordingly. Nay, we are able to love Him quite disinterestedly. For we conceive God as supremely good and perfect in Himself,

and, therefore, we can also love Him for Himself as the Highest and Absolute Good. So to love Him is the most perfect act of our will.

Now, we can extend this most perfect love to our fellow-creatures. For love has a twofold object, the one primary, the other secondary. The primary object is that which is good and perfect in itself; the secondary, that which partakes of the goodness of the former or is connected with it. We love not only ourselves, but also those allied to us; and not only our friends, but, on their account, also their kin. Rational creation in a special manner participates in the perfection of God, being His very likeness and being destined to the closest union with Him in eternal bliss. Consequently it can be embraced as a secondary object with the very same love with which we embrace God, the Supreme Good.[19] The love which we thus extend from God to our fellow-creatures is the highest that can be conceived, because its motive is the Deity itself; it is the most universal, because absolutely nobody is excluded from it; it is the purest and sincerest, because it is not entertained in view of any advantage to be received; it shares the qualities of divine love, and is, therefore, by its nature steady and unchangeable in the midst of all the changes to which human nature is subject. And if every love that is genuine manifests itself by doing good, it stands to reason that this divine love, usually called charity, prompts us most effectually to confer on others the greatest benefits. While agnosticism and materialism take sensuous love, and unchristian rationalism chooses philanthropy for

[19] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., ii.-ii., qu. 25, art. 12.

the basis of altruism, theistic philosophy rests beneficence on charity.

188. Sublime as the love of man for the sake of God is, Christian ethics not merely recommends it, but imposes it on every one as a strict duty. For, whilst it is possible to love the rational creature on account of the Creator, it is impossible to love the Divine Creator without loving the creatures, which by their nature are the likenesses of His perfections and are destined to the closest union with Him. The sincere affection for the Infinite Goodness cannot but redound to the image of the same, as, *vice versâ*, hatred towards the efflux necessarily implies aversion to the source. But we are in strictness obliged to love God as the Supreme Good; consequently we are bound to love for His sake also every creature endowed with reason, as the reflection of His Goodness.

Thus, while the new morals do not require internal goodness, but insist only on external acts, Christian ethics impresses on us the highest sentiment of love as a strict divinely-ordained duty. And for this very reason that love is a divine law, God, the searcher of hearts, becomes its enforcer by eternal sanction. Its absence in us is in His judgment a sin deserving condemnation; its presence renders us worthy of His friendship and blissful possession. Benefits rise in His sight in value in proportion as the love in which they originate is disinterested and sincere; and they lose their worth if the motive from which they spring is egoistic. He thus, by eternal reward and punishment, sustains and fosters the purest love in our hearts, unlike men, who by their laws directly ordain only external acts, and perceiving but the outward

appearance, often praise and recompense not genuine virtue, but its semblance only, and so stimulate pride and vainglory.

The love of man for the sake of God is essentially universal. For, though the divine likeness is not always manifest in our actions, it is shown forth by the very nature of the soul itself; and though all do not live up to so high a destiny, still every one is destined to the closest union with the Deity. Consequently, as this kind of love, the most sublime of all, is prescribed by the law of God and dictated by our conscience, we are obliged to embrace with sincere affection friends and enemies, relations and strangers, fellow-citizens and foreigners, the civilized and the uncivilized, the good and the bad; in a word, all mankind, as if reduced to one family united by the strongest ties.

189. Charity cannot inflame the heart without bursting forth into acts of beneficence, particularly when the needs of those who are sincerely loved demand assistance. Such needs are numberless and so conditioned that relief cannot be obtained but from fellow-creatures, and cannot be expected but from tender pity. Hence, the nature of charity, as well as the mutual dependence established among men by God's providence, proves beneficence to be a divinely-ordained duty. And as, furthermore, charity is not less universal than indigence among men, beneficence is plainly a duty to be discharged not towards those alone who are near to us, but also towards those remote from us; not towards those only whom it is not burdensome to help, but also towards those who cannot be relieved but with great sacri-

fices: a duty, therefore, most general, whether we regard those on whom it is imposed or those in whose behalf it is to be fulfilled.

Still a certain order in doing good to others is pointed out by nature itself. Other things being equal, a threefold reason gives preference to the claims upon our beneficence: nearer alliance with ourselves, for greater intensity is thereby given to our affection; closer union with God, for by such union the motive of love grows stronger; greater need, which renders the necessity of exercising charity more urgent.[20]

The good which charity obliges us to do to others is the very same which we wish to be done to ourselves. This is the meaning of the maxim: *Do to others as you would be done by*, which is admitted by all enlightened moralists as the general law of charity. It rests on the ground that in accordance with the right order we love others from the same motive from which we love ourselves; for in our own sight no prerogative renders us more worthy of esteem than that of being made to God's likeness. Hence, also, the maxim, *Love thy neighbor as thyself.*

Now, we wish for ourselves every kind of good. Our desire is as unlimited as our knowledge and our perfectibility. Consequently we are bound by the law of charity to wish to others and, to the best of our power, actually to confer on them every kind of good, at least as far as their needs demand it. But here, too, reason prescribes a certain order. The general good has the preference before the private, and the spiritual and eternal before the material and

[20] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., ii.–ii., qu. 26, art. 6–13.

temporal. So strictly does genuine and sincere charity follow this order in bestowing benefits that, when necessity is urgent, it obliges us to sacrifice private for public welfare, and our own bodily existence for our neighbor's spiritual life.[21] The tendency of this superior love is upward. It elevates man nearest to God: those on whom it showers benefits by contributing to their inseparable union with Him, those whom it induces to do good by making them partakers of that bounty out of which God, in His providence, takes fatherly care of all rational creation.

Christian ethics, then, has not failed to prove the strict obligation of beneficence, showing it to be ordained by God's eternal law and supported by His supreme sanction. Nay, it has made obligatory the very highest kind of love and beneficence; that love which originates in God, He Himself being its motive, and which, therefore, being far above all that is earthly and mortal, is unchangeable in the midst of the vicissitudes of human weakness, and universal; that beneficence which, in doing good, knows no limits, which is most bountiful when need is greatest, and which bestows all benefits, but with preference the very highest. Charity as prescribed by Christian morals is the completion of the right order in society. Could we conceive stronger and sweeter bonds of union, greater harmony, relations more conformable to reason, human and divine? Charity is the perfection of the entire moral order. By it rational creation is raised to God, each individual singly and all conjointly; by it we love God, the Sovereign Good, supremely, and all created good in Him and for His sake.

[21] St. Thomas, Sum. Theol., ii.–ii., qu. 26, art. 5.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

190. The basis on which the moral order must be founded is made up of man's ultimate end, of the natural distinction between good and evil, of law and conscience, of justice and love.

191. The new theories construct no such basis; they miss the true end of man, render good and evil indiscernible, do away with law and conscience, pervert justice, cripple love and beneficence.

192. Nor are they deficient merely by want of consistency; they completely overthrow every foundation of morality, because an utterly destructive tendency is intrinsic to them.

193. The high pretensions of the new philosophers, as if they endeavored to advance morality to supreme perfection, are of no avail; if sincere, they evince ignorance, if insincere, hypocrisy.

194. Should the agnostic and utilitarian theories ever be adopted and carried into practice, they would result in a direful crisis.

195. Christian ethics lays an indestructible foundation for morality; the end it proposes to man is the highest; the moral good which it bases on this end is absolute, unchangeable, elevating, and at the same time knowable and easily discernible; the moral law it teaches is divine, conceived and sanctioned from eternity, proclaimed by rational nature itself; justice and charity are made strict duties and urged by the strongest motives.

196. Hence it is to be inferred that the influence of Christian ethics on man and on society must be most wholesome

and elevating; an inference verified by the experience of nearly twenty centuries.

197. The reason why Christian morals, notwithstanding their exalted character, are so severely attacked, particularly in our age of enlightenment, is the desire of absolute independence; and the reason why the theories opposed to them are usually so utterly destructive is no other than that, in order to maintain man's absolute independence, the personal Deity must be denied, that, God being denied, matter is raised to His place, and that, matter being deified, reason is disowned and its rule transferred to passion.

190. THE moral order is, among all orders conceivable, the most universal, the most steady, the grandest, and the most sublime. It constitutes a sweet harmony not only among the powers and tendencies of man, but also among the members of society; and not only among all rational creatures, but also between creation and the Creator, establishing everywhere the right relations, which, being founded on the nature of things, are not temporal and subject to changes, but eternal and absolutely necessary, and cannot be looked upon at any time as of slight importance, but are forever the essential conditions to ultimate perfection and consummate happiness. Being of such nature, morality must rest on a broad and indestructible basis; for the more massive and solid the building, the more substantial must be its foundation.

We have already seen what this basis is on which morals must be founded. The ultimate end of man is, as it were, the imperishable rock which sustains the entire moral system. On it rest, as on an immovable groundwork, the morally good and evil, law and conscience, rights and justice, love and beneficence; good being that which leads to the

ultimate end, law establishing the inviolable necessity of doing good and avoiding evil, justice and beneficence giving form and existence to society. From the groundwork thus laid rises all morality, the duties of both individual and social life, all supported by the strongest motives and urged by sacred obligation and sanction, and all, if faithfully complied with, contributing to complete the sublime beauty of the world of rational beings.

After having, in the preceding chapters, treated at full length of the foundation of morality as laid down of old by Christian ethics, and reconstructed by modern theories, let us briefly recapitulate the various conclusions arrived at in the course of our discussion.

191. To speak first of the new systems, the greatest possible amount of earthly pleasures to be enjoyed, individually or socially, is not, as modern philosophers think, our ultimate end. It is not the highest goal to which we should tend; for if it were so, man would be an end unto himself. Nor is the highest degree of pleasure a higher object at all to which human activity is to be directed, since it is not distinct from action, but is only its complement. Moreover, earthly pleasures are not a complete gratification of all human desires, because they are always alloyed with pain, short in duration, and low in kind, being organic, sensual and egoistic. They are not the end to which rational nature tends, nor one which might be regarded as knowable and universally attainable, because a considerable surplus of them is denied to most mortals, or is, even when fortune smiles, an indefinite and incalculable quantity, owing to its relativity.

The hedonistic philosophy thus misses the true end of man. This end missed, the whole basis of morals crumbles. Good, as well as happiness, owing both to the indefiniteness of the end to which it conduces and to its own relativity, becomes unsteady, changeable, and indiscernible, and being no more than an organic adjustment, loses all loftiness and sublimity. Human action is no longer governed by reason, but by sense. Accordingly the moral law turns out to be a merely organic necessity established by nature, not a necessity required by reason and ordained by the Divine Lawgiver. Its nature is explained in many ways. Since morality is the adjustment of the best evolved life, moral laws coincide with the conditions of perfect sentient existence; and, furthermore, as life is heightened by pleasure-giving action, and is destroyed by pain, their binding force is understood to be identical with the necessity of pursuing the greatest surplus of pleasure; and this necessity again presents itself in consciousness as the supremacy of complex or sympathetic feelings, since it is by following them, as guides, that we obtain pleasure in greater amount. The moral laws so conceived are, in the beginning of human existence, enforced by external coercion proceeding from tyrants or priests, and by contracts concluded under the pressure of circumstances; later on, when evolution has advanced, by political laws and public opinion, and yet later by the effects of human action for self and for others. Only when, towards the climax of evolution, the experience of ages will have been generalized and registered in the nervous system, and when corresponding emotions and habits will have been formed; the moral

sense will be fully developed and will, as a law inherent in man, as a second nature, so control his actions as to bring to ultimate perfection both his conduct and his happiness.

But after examination the whole theory is found to be untenable and self-contradictory. It mars the idea of law and destroys its every constituent element. Law, and the moral law pre-eminently, is necessarily the work of reason. Moral precepts are consistently with the agnostic and positive views altogether impossible; for the greatest amount of happiness that may be attained is unascertainable; and the claims of self and of society cannot be definitely reconciled. The binding force or obligation of precepts, the formal constituent of law, is impaired by the new theories. It has been conceived as the necessity intrinsic to pleasure for the maintenance and evolution of life, the most necessary of all ends. But life itself is not a necessary end, nor are pleasures necessary means for it. There is, moreover, no power conceivable by which law might subject to itself the human will. The higher feelings, which are thought to yield greater pleasure, can of themselves assert no uncontested authority. Rulers, governments, society itself are possessed of none but physical force; hence they may, and certainly will be resisted, if not by individuals severally, at least by groups. Moral influence through public opinion and just legislation can be exercised only when the right law of conduct is already established in power and men are conscious of being subject to it. The effects of action constitute no rule that enforces itself, if man is supposed to be supreme and independent.

But if the higher feelings have of themselves no authority, or are not sufficiently supported from without; if neither governments, nor religion, nor laws, nor public opinion, nor social influence can moralize man; if the effects of action, through the experience of ages, cannot assert themselves as a rule and sway the human will: there are no moral habits formed, no general principles abstracted, registered in the nervous system and transmitted to succeeding generations. The moral sense, then, must be understood to be an incongruous fiction. Its origin is contrary to reason; for it is an evolution from no antecedent stages and from no sufficient cause. Its conception is a shocking absurdity. Though thought to be the very climax of rational life, it emerges from matter and from merely animal existence; it works in part automatically and unconsciously, in part from vague perception and feeling; it is illusive and so discredits and stultifies reason. Though said to be the supreme perfection of the moral man, it is nothing else than the first and strongest passion, the love of pleasure, or sexual love, uncontrolled and fully emancipated. Every element of the moral law is thus utterly destroyed.

With law also justice and beneficence are exterminated: for they are integral parts of the moral order. Justice conceived as the necessary condition to the survival of the fittest species, the fittest variety, the fittest group, is no longer the equal protection of the freedom of all, but is the oppression of the weaker by the stronger. Conceived as the rule which society may enforce on all individuals in behalf of its own welfare, it is the tyranny of governments or of ma-

jorities subject to no higher authority. Beneficence cannot be regarded as a moral precept. Utilitarianism cannot make it obligatory in the present state of evolution. According to Mr. Spencer's views it is not only quite indefinite and uncertain as a duty, but, in the majority of cases, and particularly when needed most, positively immoral, because contrary to the fundamental laws of evolution.

Nor is man impelled to justice and beneficence by any strong, efficient motive. The sentiments which are thought to prompt him to pay regard for others' rights and to practise generous beneficence are the sympathetic feelings. But these are radically egoistic, and are gratified only from love of self. Being such, they just as little lead to other-regarding virtues as darkness begets light or death develops life.

Thus the entire foundation of morality is completely overthrown. No part whatsoever is left of it, neither the ultimate end nor the light that shows the way to it, neither good nor evil, neither law nor conscience, neither reward nor punishment, neither justice nor love.

192. The new theories have not merely failed, by want of consistency, to lay a new basis of morals, but are of their very nature utterly destructive of any support on which right conduct may be rested. This assertion may seem untrue and offensive in the face of so many protestations of zeal for pure and elevated morality which we hear the new philosophers daily utter. But the odium which on this account may be thrown on the Christian critic ought not to perplex us. We have to judge ethical theories,

not by the high pretensions which their authors put forth, but by the principles from which they proceed and the conclusions at which they must consistently arrive. Positivists and agnostics proceed from the negation of any firm objective reality; for they deny the self-existent First Cause distinct from the universe, deny the spirituality, immortality, and freedom of the soul, deny substance underlying the phenomena, whether mental or physical, as their permanent substratum. On a foundation so utterly unreal they build up ethical principles which are altogether untenable, vague, meaningless, and self-contradictory. The conclusions thence drawn are of the same kind. They contain no definite moral precepts which must necessarily be obeyed; they lay down no rules which bind the will; establish no authority to which man has to submit; set up no ideals to which he is bound to look up. Every discussion results in doubt; every important question remains unsolved; every duty becomes uncertain; the outlines of the order necessary for man and for society are dim and indiscernible; the goal which we have to reach and the way which we have to pursue are wrapped in darkness. Only one tenet is set forth as certain and undeniable, and is, indeed, deduced, with perfect consistency, from the first principles. This one tenet is, that all firm supports of morality have given way to modern criticism; that, since man is independent of a Creator, there is no aim for him above this material world, no law for his will, no certain restraint for his passions, no sacredness of obligation, no responsibility, no fear, no hope beyond the grave. It would seem as if, while the minds were engulfed in the night of skepticism, a

catastrophe had shaken the entire moral order to its very foundation.

193. It is not difficult to perceive what value is to be attached to the solemn protestations of zeal for lofty morality so often heard from the devisers of the new theories. Are they sincere? Then the new philosophers are unable to realize the direct and most obvious consequences of their doctrines. After they have degraded man to the brute, dethroned reason and transferred its function to passion; after they have destroyed whatever is essential to moral rectitude, its end, its standard, its law, its motive, and have done away with the source of all right and the support of all order, they come to tell us that they have purified morals and established them on a more solid basis. Is it possible that men of superior talents, of rare erudition and wide experience, can unconsciously blunder to such a degree? It would be the strangest of all phenomena. Are their protestations insincere? Then they are open to the charge of the most abominable hypocrisy of which man has ever been guilty. For in this hypothesis these new moralists treacherously exterminate moral goodness. By so doing they perpetrate a twofold crime: one, by depriving mankind of its highest good, of its supreme end, of true happiness, of virtue, peace, order, and justice; another, by doing such an enormous mischief insidiously, under the garb of promoters of pure morality.

Yet let their sincerity be what it may. It is at least utterly absurd on their part to speak of establishing a basis of morality. The murderer might as well boast of the clemency which he shows towards

his victim as they of the moral greatness and perfection which they build up. It is an abuse of words, a perversion of human language, when immorality is termed lofty morality, when the utter ruin of virtue is called its consummation; and the perversion is the more shocking if, at the same time, Christianity, through so many ages the parent of mercy and charity and the protection of justice, is charged with hypocrisy, corruption, and devil-worship.

194. It is not enough, however, to have directed public attention to the destructive tendencies of the new theories. Since they have been devised as the basis of modern education, and are meant to be carried into practice, it becomes necessary to expose the evil consequences with which they are fraught for society at large. The agnostics generally show themselves not at all afraid to have their doctrine tested by the influence which it has thus far exercised. The Christian view, they tell us, has actually to a great extent been superseded both in public life and in the schools by the modern theories, and yet the nations have not, on that account, become miserable or dissolute in morals; on the contrary, we see them enjoy richer blessings and profounder peace than ever. We cannot enter here on a lengthy comparison between the happiness of the present and the former ages, or search into the real causes of the advance made in civilization. A few words will suffice to illustrate the futility of agnostic confidence. Both Mr. Mallock and Mr. Lilly have very appropriately remarked that the moral condition of our age is by no means commensurate with the results which the new theories are intended to produce.

Christianity having educated the nations and shaped their civilization, Christian views, Christian laws, Christian customs and habits cannot disappear at once from this earth. Though abandoned by many, though silenced and persecuted, Christianism continues to be a power. It still has an innumerable host of followers, who take its laws as the standard of their conduct. Even those who have renounced belief in it are not rid of its influence. They have been brought up by such as were yet more or less imbued with Christian or theistic principles; they were trained to habits and sentiments which originated in Christian times and countries; they lived and still live in company which is not altogether unchristian; they learned to admire deeds and institutions which are products of Christian thought and feeling. Christianity still exists in thousands of its effects, and through them ennobles the minds and hearts even of its bitterest enemies. Comparing the new philosophers to painters, Mr. Mallock shows how vainly they imagine that they have abolished religion as one of the colors of life.

"There is," he says, "this all-important point that quite escapes them: They sweep the color, in its pure state, clear off the palette; and then profess to show us, by experiment, that they can get on perfectly well without it. But they never seem to suspect that it may be mixed up with the colors they retain, and be the secret of their depth and lustre. Let them see whether religion be not lurking there, as a subtle coloring principle in all their pigments, even a grain of it producing effects that else were quite impossible. Let them only begin this analysis, and it will very soon be clear to them that to cleanse life of religion is not so simple a process as they seem to fancy it. Its actual dogmas may be readily put away from us; not so the effects which these dogmas have worked during the course of centuries. In disguised forms they are around us

everywhere ; they confront us in every human interest, in every human pleasure. They have beaten themselves into life : they have eaten their way into it. Like a secret sap, they have flavored every fruit in the garden. They are like a powerful drug, a stimulant, that has been injected into our whole system." [1]

To calculate the influence of the modern theories on life, we must deduct from the present state of society all that is left in it of Christian civilization, and picture to ourselves an age in which moral convictions are shaped exclusively by agnostic and positive philosophy. In such an age, while the idea of a personal God would be blotted out, the supramundane Creator being looked upon as a fiction or a fraud, nature, as the only object of science, would be known to the greatest possible extent, and human faculties would by the study of it be trained to the keenest and most skillful activity. Man would then be taught to pursue with all his energies earthly happiness, consisting in the greatest possible surplus of pleasure, because this must be apprehended by him as the only object of life, and as the real value of his existence. He would, furthermore, be told that, being his own end and his own supreme master, he was subject in the pursuit of pleasure to no law, no authority, not to parents, or ministers of religion, or governments ; that, on the contrary, to act morally he must direct himself by the foresight of pain and pleasure attending his actions, and chiefly by his innate tendencies and by habits that result from long experience and are ingrained in his organism. It would, however, at the same time be understood that, as pleasure is relative and variable with persons and

[1] Is Life Worth Living ? p. 85.

circumstances, no fixed and general rule of conduct could be laid down, except that each should enjoy life as much as possible by reaping all the fruits of superiority to which he might rise, being doomed, if not successful, to succumb in the universal struggle for existence. If this new gospel were, in fact, preached everywhere for some length of time; if men were from childhood imbued with it in their families as well as in the schools; if the press and all the organs of public opinion were constantly to inculcate it, denouncing and stigmatizing every other view; if its destructive tendencies had full and unobstructed play, every other influence being stopped, and every other teaching silenced; the face of the earth would soon be changed by a direful moral crisis. Mankind would return to the chaotic condition from which it is supposed to have emerged, to a condition in which, passions reigning supreme, disorder, oppression, and bloody destruction would prevail throughout, as they used to do among fierce barbarians. A catastrophe would be the result in the moral world similar to that which, in Mr. Spencer's opinion, will take place in the physical world, when, after the climax of evolution will have been reached, the heavenly bodies colliding, the universe will again be reduced to a nebulous mass.

195. Contrasted with theories resulting in such utter destruction, Christian ethics presents a most consoling aspect. It, in reality, proposes to man an ultimate end, the highest and the loftiest that can be conceived, since it regards as such the Deity itself embraced eternally in perfect contemplation and love. And it proposes this end not by gratuitous assump-

tion or fictitiously, but by strict demonstration and the analysis of human nature. Such being the end of man, moral good and moral evil are understood to be absolute, unchangeable, distinct from each other, and knowable. For good consists in the direction of free action towards the ultimate end, in the right relation of our conduct to God, in the order required by rational nature and necessarily recognized by reason. But as God stands out with clear distinctness and is most knowable, the way that leads to Him is distinct and discernible; and as both His essence and the essence of man and of his free actions are always the same, the right relation of human conduct, the order required by nature and by reason, is not relative and variable, but absolute and unchangeable. Accordingly, good is not an organic adjustment or sensuous pleasure, nor is evil merely an organic disorder or pain of sense; the one is the reign of reason, man's highest elevation, the striving for the infinite, conformity with God; the other, on the contrary, is the rule of base passion, the lowest degradation of a human being, opposition to the Supreme Goodness, revolt from the Creator.

Christian ethics teaches us a law, so peremptorily and absolutely laying us under the necessity of doing good and avoiding evil, that its transgression entails the forfeiture of final happiness.

Law is necessarily required by the rational nature of the Creator and the creature, is enacted from all eternity and promulgated from the very moment of man's creation. For the right order, by which all rational creation is reduced to perfect harmony, and, thus harmonized, is rendered subordinate to the ultimate end.

is eternally conceived and necessarily sanctioned by the Deity. Were God ever to ignore this universal and most sacred order, or not to sustain and vindicate it, or not to give impulse towards carrying it out to every rational being, He would no longer be conceived as infinitely perfect and holy. What Divine Reason necessarily enacts in eternity, human reason necessarily manifests in time. As the latter is the created likeness of the former, it also knows, either intuitively by its first principles or by demonstration from them, the order that becomes rational creation, and, like a divine voice never to be silenced, loudly proclaims it to every human being. The moral order is thus the most perfect law, which has for its author God Himself, for its end the glory of the Creator and the happiness of the creature; which is by its nature absolutely necessary and unchangeable, by the sanction, which attends it, powerful enough to constrain every will, though leaving freedom intact and unabridged, by the light which it sheds on every mind, sufficient, directly or indirectly, to dispose and adjust all human affairs.

Justice and beneficence are within the province of the moral order. Justice guarantees the means needed for each one's free activity in the pursuit of the ultimate end, and unites all into one harmonious society in behalf of mutual assistance. Beneficence, issuing from the sincere love with which man embraces man for the sake of God, promotes private and public well-being, assuages pain, relieves misery, wherever aid is needed, though recompensed by no earthly reward. Both are divinely ordained.

Thus Christian ethics lays for morality a foundation

so deep and solid that no convulsion whatever can destroy it, no power, no arbitrary will, no strength of passion can ever overthrow or even shake it; and so broad and perfect, that all duties, all virtues, even the loftiest and most sublime, may like a grand symmetric structure be based on it. This foundation is the eternal Deity itself. For the essence of God is the source of all that is, His goodness is the end to which all creation ultimately tends, His wisdom eternally conceives the right order required by the ultimate end and by rational nature destined for it; His holiness sanctions this order as a sacred unchangeable law; His creative act stamps the law on the mind and heart of every creature endowed with reason, and His justice sustains it by the highest rewards and the severest punishments.

196. Need we say that Christian ethics, laying such a foundation, builds up and consolidates morality in the most perfect manner? No destructive tendency can be found in it even by the most exact analysis; no virtue, no support of rectitude, no deterrent from vice is missing in it. On the contrary, it sets before man the highest standard of moral purity and furnishes him with every motive to conform his conduct to it. For, the ultimate end it proposes is not only the highest, but also the most attractive, because consisting in the Supreme Good to be possessed in eternal happiness. The order it manifests as necessary is wonderfully harmonious, universal, coinciding with the most sublime beauty; the good it shows to be prescribed elevates man to a noble likeness of God. The law which it teaches is supremely binding. This law implies the strictest obligation

and is supported by such sanction as counterbalances all passions, outweighs all labor and hardship to be undergone and all pleasures to be renounced for the sake of virtue. It is most holy, for it perfects the whole of human nature in an eminent degree. It enlightens the intellect with divine truth, inspires the will with love of the good, subdues the lower tendencies and appetites, strengthens what is high and noble in man. Its precepts, being the dictates, the universal principles and injunctions of reason, are common to all men and to all nations, and regulate all human relations. And since human reason is the participation of the divine, they are the reflection of Divine Wisdom, and the decrees of Supreme Holiness.

However it is not necessary to prove in many words that Christian ethics is, by its nature, bound to exercise a wholesome influence on man and on society. History evinces it as an undeniable fact. Not as if there had been a time in which the expounded ethical doctrine had, apart from supernatural revelation, served as a guide of conduct. Unaided reason has never devised a moral theory free from grave pernicious errors. Only the Christian religion has taught pure, untarnished morality and has given sufficient strength to practice it. Still all the ethical tenets which sound reason deduces from self-evident principles underlie Christian morals as a basis. The Christian religion presupposes God as the natural end of man, but elevates the union finally to be effected between the Creator and the creature to one of a higher order. It presupposes the natural law of morality insomuch that it can demand

general acceptance only on this ground; it presupposes eternal retribution, though it enhances the same in proportion to the higher end of the redeemed; it presupposes and takes up into its system the moral precepts contained in rational ethics, omitting or contradicting none, but developing them to greater perfection. From all this it is to be inferred that the influence exercised by Christian morals evidences also the influence proper to the ethical doctrine of sound philosophy, in the same way as the solidity of the structure is a proof for the solidity of the foundation, and as the effect produced by the total cause manifests the efficacy of the partial causes.

What Christianity has in reality effected is patent to every unprejudiced mind. The nations that in the course of nearly twenty centuries have been civilized, the empires that in the same time have been founded and established in peace and harmony, the idolatry that has been abolished, the cruelties that have been mitigated and the vices that have been uprooted, the exalted virtues that have everywhere been practiced, the social institutions that have been erected to protect justice and freedom, and to exercise charity and mercy—all testify to the most wholesome and most elevating influence which the Christian religion has exercised. The dark sides of those ages do not darken Christianity itself. They were either the relics of times previous to its preaching, or the shortcomings of human nature, which, the freedom of will being left intact, could disappear only gradually: or they are to be attributed, not to the working of the Christian religion, but rather to secret or open apostasy from it, or to the obstruction of its agency

by opposition and persecution. There are, indeed, many found to be stained by vice and ignorance even in the sunshine of Christianity. But how great in every period of the Christian ages is the multitude of those who by its influence have been ennobled and perfected? And how conspicuous is the integrity, innocence, love, and disinterestedness that adorns them? Their virtues were more than human, far superior to the strength of mortal man. They were the realization of the highest ideas of morality, the completion of God's likeness in man.

In truth, experience confirms what reason preconceives. It proves to evidence that the influence exercised by Christian ethics makes for the greatest perfection of the human race.

197. One question seems yet to demand a solution. If Christian morals are, as they have been shown to be, perfect and elevating, how does it come to pass that they have always been so severely attacked and particularly in our age of enlightenment? And whence is it that they have been thus attacked, though the theories devised to supplant them have always proved such as must lead to utter disorder and destruction? The reason demands a careful inquiry; for, if searched into, it will manifest the inwardness of the opposition which theism and Christianity have always met with.

A phenomenon that recurs so often in the course of time and is most striking in a period when the human mind seems to approach the highest degree of refined culture, must be traced back to a cause lying deep in human nature. A tendency, indeed, is found in the latter, which, though of high origin, is apt, if not

well regulated, to run counter to the right order, even when a high degree of intellectual culture is reached. There is in man, free by nature, an intense desire of independence. Pushed to extremes, against the dictates of reason, this desire induces man to throw off the yoke of subjection not only to human authority, but also to the Creator. He then looks upon himself as absolutely independent, as his own master, subject to no law and no power. To give a solid basis to such complete independence, the existence of God must be denied. But as the Deity is the source of all being, its denial is necessarily attended with most momentous consequences. First, rational nature is turned into a monstrous absurdity. Being the reflection of the Eternal Light, it is darkened and extinguished; though longing for the infinite, it is cut off from everything beyond the finite world; though seeking and pursuing truth by an innate impulse, it is rendered deceitful with regard to the eternal and supersensible objects of knowledge; though made for perfect happiness, it is placed in the impossibility of ever attaining the Supreme Good. Reason as a spiritual, supersensuous faculty must be disowned together with the Deity.

If the existence of spirit is denied, matter, which in this visible universe, and especially in the organic world, is endowed with so much power and beauty, rises in importance. It takes the place of the rational soul and is made the source of life and thought. It even supersedes God. It is conceived as self-existing and self-evolving; its laws are regarded as eternal, supreme, and absolutely universal, its forces as productive of every form of existence. Matter, the pro-

lific source of all that is, itself absolute and independent, is deified.

These are the general outlines of nearly all philosophical errors from the highest antiquity down to our days. When philosophy strays from the path of truth, it usually denies God, in order to elevate man, and lowers reason by denying its immateriality, in order to establish the rule of the senses. Thus we find materialism and realistic pantheism rampant among the philosophers of the two most highly cultured nations of the ancient world, the Greeks and Romans. The polytheism embraced by the common people was in principle not much different. For the gods scarcely differed from the powers of nature, and if they did, they were not essentially different from man. It is this same desire of independence, no longer controlled by reason, that has betrayed the philosophers of to-day into atheism. Superior talents and high mental culture have saved neither modern nor ancient thinkers from such fatal errors; on the contrary, if these gifts are made subservient to pride, they cannot but hasten the revolt from God.

But we have not yet arrived at the lowest degree of abasement. Matter left to itself is a chaos governed by chance. It works disorder in the visible universe and much more in human nature. If reason is denied and matter is made independent, the conception of ideals, the higher aspirations, the love of the eternal and supersensible decay, the law of conduct originating in wisdom and holiness is shrouded in darkness. As a necessary consequence the rule of passion is established, which not only degrades man to the level of the brute, but deranges even his

organic nature. The last result must be utter disorder both in individual and in social existence.

Such is the nature, such the origin and final issue of the apostasy from God. It springs from pride, and, by a natural and most just retribution, ends in disorder and degradation. This one conclusion speaks more than volumes could against atheistic philosophy.

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